

## 1 Introduction

Physical activity contributes good health, yet sedentary lifestyles are contributing to growing levels of non-communicable diseases mortality risk across high income and increasingly low- and middle-income countries (Bauman et al., 2012; Kokkinos, Sheriff, & Kheirbek, 2011).

As governments and health organisations grow increasingly reactive to the spectre of inactivity, a plethora of campaigns to promote physical activity have been rolled out in developed countries (Hanlon, Morris, & Nabbs, 2010; Henderson, 2009). Evidence suggests that regular cycling can contribute to improved health outcomes and reduced all-cause mortality (Andersen, Schnohr, Schroll, & Hein, 2000; Celis-Morales et al., 2017). Strategies to promote cycling have therefore been widely endorsed by UK government (Department of Transport (DfT)), 2017; Health Select Committee, 2004). Emphasis around such interventions has often been placed upon the promotion of active travel and commuting in order to contribute to oblique public health strategies, easing traffic congestion and to reduce pollution amplified due to increasing car-dependence, and less so on the promotion of recreational cycling (Savan, Cohlmeier, & Ledsham, 2017; Spotswood, Chatterton, Tapp, & Williams, 2015).

However, it is not only health and transport agencies that are charged with increasing cycling participation. Indeed, sport policy in England has recently shifted towards a combined emphasis that blends physical activity into the strategic agenda. The current Sport England strategy entitled *Towards an Active Nation* is explicit in its distinction between sport and physical activity, and outlines a move away from a sole and historic focus on sport participation towards a need to understand “how active people are overall” (Sport England, 2016, p.7). Sport England is committed to increasing the number of people participating in cycling for both sport and leisure, and this shift has served to extend Sport England’s remit to encourage the take up of cycling for travel (Sport England, 2017).

Participation in cycling can reflect a variety of motives and serve a number of functions. Grous (2011) drew on a typology of cyclists to discern between different forms of engagement with the activity: families who cycle together, recreational users who cycle for leisure and light exercise, commuters, and enthusiasts who cycle for sport. Whereas high rates of both recreational and utilitarian cycling can be observed in Northern European countries due, in part, to dedicated and widely established cycle networks (Grous, 2011; Shephard, 2008), cycling rates across the UK have remained low in comparison. Concentrating more specifically on England, the DfT (2016) report that between 2014 and 2015, 14.7% of the population cycled at least once per month, and of these, 10.9% cycled for upwards of 60 minutes (DfT, 2016). However, only 2.6% of people in England cycled on five occasions per week (DfT, 2016). Based on these data, it would appear that cycling contributes only modestly to people's attainment of the Department of Health's (2011) minimum recommendation for weekly physical activity (at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity over five days of the week).

Therefore, we examine the charity-led implementation of a recreational cycling programme in local communities across Merseyside, England. Delivered by the *Cycling Projects* nonprofit organisation (NPO), *Pedal Away* programmes are intended to engage members of the public in physical activity via the provision of regular structured episodes of exercise. To provide both geographical and demographic context to the research, we examined Pedal Away programmes that run in the city region combined authority of Liverpool, Merseyside, England. As a combined authority, the Liverpool city region includes six local council boroughs: Liverpool, Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral (Knowsley Council, 2017). According to the 2015 English Indices of Social Deprivation, Liverpool and Knowsley are ranked in the top four of "local authority districts with the highest proportion of their neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods

nationally” (Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 2015, p. 10). In conjunction, Liverpool also has the highest level of health deprivation and disability, (a measure of premature death and the impairment of quality of life by poor health) at a figure of 45.8% (DCLG, 2015). When plotting population activity levels in these areas, figures are also low. Between 2014 and 2015, the percentage of denizens of Knowsley and Liverpool reported as being physically active was 45.7% and 47.6%, respectively; figures which were lower than the national average of 57% (Sport England, 2017). That disproportionately high levels of this population are classed as insufficiently active or inactive (Sport England, 2017) further contributes to the nexus of health deprivation in these districts.

To this end, the purpose of this study was to examine how Cycling Projects mobilises and deploys the variety of resources it requires to implement inclusive cycling programmes within the communities it operates. To do this, we drew upon and adapted McCarthy and Zald’s (1973, 1977, 2002) framework of resource mobilisation theory (RMT) – a strand of social movement theory – to address the following research objectives:

**Research Objective 1:** To discern the resources which are pertinent to the movement

**Research Objective 2:** To understand how the movement mobilises such resources

**Research Objective 3:** To illustrate how the movement legitimises itself within its industry

In using RMT to attend to these research questions and frame our exposition of the organisation, we go on to conceptualise Cycling Projects as a Movement for Movement Organisation (MMO): an NPO that embeds within local communities and holds the specific intention of driving up the physical recreation of the people residing in them.

### **1.1 Managing sport and health**

The amelioration of complex and intractable social problems associated with ill-health and physical inactivity can exceed the capability of the public sector; thus, in recent

years, efforts to find solutions to such challenges have brought about the erosion of traditional sector boundaries as public, profit, and non-profit sector organisations increasingly operate within the same domains (Misener & Misener, 2017). Indeed, sport organisations have gained increasing recognition within the health sector because they are perceived to appeal to many participants otherwise ambivalent to broader public health initiatives, and can therefore be leveraged to achieve broader policy goals (Casey, Payne, & Eime, 2009; Misener & Misener, 2016). Consequently, Misener and Misener (2017) explained that distinctions between the activities and roles undertaken by public, profit, and nonprofit sector organisations in relation to the promotion of sport, physical activity and health have grown increasingly blurred.

Concomitantly, classic organisational frameworks have undergone structural adaptations as relationships between public, profit, and non-profit organisations have altered, and cross-sector partnerships between health providers and sport organisations have proliferated across Western sport development systems (Casey et al., 2009; Marlier et al., 2015; Misener & Misener, 2017). Such cross-sector and intra-sector partnerships are critical to building organisational capacity (Marlier et al., 2015). Whilst there are examples of cross-sector partnership working wherein sport organisations have effectively been able to build their health promotion capacity (c.f. Casey et al., 2009, 2012; Marlier et al., 2015), the integration of such an agenda is not without its complications. Naturally, most sport organisations are influenced and affected by the balance of resource dependence that exists across the partnerships in which they are embedded (Casey et al., 2009; Casey et al., 2012; Walker & Hayton, 2017). However, one of the key challenges to the integration of sport and health promotion is often one of complementarity between public organisations and NPOs, as institutional cultural differences can serve to undermine effective collaboration (Marlier et al., 2015; Millar & Doherty, 2016).

Such incongruent inter-organisational cultures highlight the absence of complementarity on the part of the NPO to effectively align to broader policy objectives surrounding public health, which in turn reflects a lack of organisational readiness to change (Casey et al., 2012; Millar & Doherty, 2016; Misener & Misener, 2016). If a sport organisation is inert to changing its organisational framework to accommodate greater health promotion it may limit its compatibility with potential collaborators, and therefore reduce its ability to mobilise resources which, at a time of economic austerity, may prove detrimental to its growth and sustainability (Casey et al., 2012; Misener & Misener, 2016). Indeed, as Walker and Hayton (2018) indicated, local authority provision for sport in England is reducing as the public sector retracts under politically driven austerity measures, and this has meant that nonprofit sport organisations are increasingly having to step into this void to deliver sport services. At a time of increasing resource scarcity, NPOs (inclusive of voluntary and community bodies) ostensibly face greater challenges to building their organisational capacities to integrate a sport-health agenda. Thus, as Misener and Misener (2017) have outlined, new arrangements between various public, profit and nonprofit providers of sport and physical activity have emerged in recent times, yet limited research has been undertaken to examine a nonprofit-led recreational programme that may contribute to such health goals.

## **1.2 Enter Cycling Projects & the Pedal Away programme**

Cycling Projects is a national charity<sup>1</sup> in the UK. The Cycling Projects charity primarily delivers two products: Pedal Away and Wheels for All. Wheels for All is the longer established programme and delivers accessible cycling opportunities for children and adults with disabilities in 50 centres across England and Wales. The Pedal Away strand, on the other, hand is a burgeoning programme when compared to Wheels for All as its suite of hub

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<sup>1</sup> As a charitable organisation, Cycling Projects is a non-profit organisation that operates within the ‘third’ or non-profit sector.

centres only reach across Merseyside and Lancashire in the North West of England.

Therefore, the central focus of this article is on the implementation of the Pedal Away arm of the Cycling Projects charity, and those specifically delivered across its ten Merseyside-based hubs across its three boroughs of operation. Pedal Away then, is a community-based scheme which promotes and provides recreational cycling sessions for beginner and intermediate riders. Pedal Away programmes run in deprived communities, and aim to provide inclusive cycling for low income families, ethnic minority groups, individuals with chronic health conditions, and those affected by low mental wellbeing. The concept of Pedal Away is to link up led-cycle rides with existing cycle infrastructure and parks to engage local communities in recreational cycling. The charity provides bikes at each hub site for participants to use. A minimum of two rides are scheduled out of each hub per week, each session lasts for up to two hours (as this is the extent to which each ride is insured by the organisation for), and a donation of £1 sterling per participant per session (inclusive of bike and helmet rental) is suggested.

In terms of the organisational structure of the charity, the Charity Director sits at the top of the Cycling Projects, with regional Pedal Away leadership devolved to paid development officers (one per region of operation). The development officer has oversight for all community hub centres across the region that they are responsible for, and this includes the coordination of programmes, staffing and training. To help the development officers acquit their duties and facilitate programme delivery, the charity recruits paid sessional ride leaders and non-paid volunteers from the participant base to train and lead the cycle rides. Unpaid volunteers operate in their local or home hub, whereas the paid ride leaders (of which there are six employed across the Merseyside Pedal Away network) are more likely to work across the Pedal Away network to deliver cycle sessions across multiple hub sites. Ideally, each ride requires three trained personnel to provide front, mid, and back

markers to lead, follow and support rides and safely assist road crossings, as well as to undertake participant registrations and manage the cycling equipment before, during and after every session. Beyond this, Cycling Projects is governed by a Board of Trustees, and the organisation employs a limited number of back room administrative staff who are based at council utility and office spaces which the charity is charged a peppercorn rent for. The charity does not own any physical infrastructure.

### **1.3 The healthism discourse in the promotion of physical activity and healthy lifestyles**

In the UK, health and sport policies frequently promulgate information about the risks associated with physical inactivity, messages which simultaneously endorse models of behaviour change “that promote self-management and individualised choice” (Rich, De Pian, & Francombe-Webb, 2015, p. 4). Such messages are in keeping with a neoliberal UK policy agenda which has underpinned a shift in responsibility for public health from the state to the individual over the past 20 years (Rich, De Pian, & Francombe-Webb, 2015; Spotswood, Chatterton, Tap, & Williams, 2015). Behaviour change models therefore feed a prevailing discourse of healthism: the notion that healthy lifestyle choices are a matter of individual will, and that the individual is accountable for the condition of their own health and that of their dependents (Mansfield & Rich, 2013; Rich et al., 2015). Critics of individualist approaches advocated through such behaviour change models fail to consider the systems, structures and social processes that affect individual action (Spotswood et al., 2015). Further, Baum and Fisher (2014) and Cohn (2014) contended that health policies that espouse a behaviour change model are limited in their reach and typically fail to reduce health inequities. Mansfield and Rich (2013) elaborated by adding that the effectiveness of such messages is particularly constrained within deprived communities and for those of low socio-economic/class backgrounds. To explicate, Rich et al. (2015) explained that the use of healthism discourses to externally regulate behaviour is unlikely to meaningfully trickle

down to marginalised sections of the community due to a knowledge deficit around how to enact correct lifestyle choices in terms of diet and exercise. In addition, Mansfield and Rich (2013) pointed out that social determinants, such as poverty, unemployment, poor education, and limited access to physical activities, also conspire to inhibit an individual's ability to engage with sustained health-benefitting levels of activity. Whilst there is a substantial body of evidence to demonstrate the relationship between social and health inequities government officials continue to favour behavioural explanations despite the limited efficacy of individualising frameworks to reach marginalised communities (Baum & Fisher, 2015; Ong et al. 2014).

Various government backed projects that have been implemented to encourage a modal shift towards active travel also present an individualist foundation (Spotswood et al., 2015). Such approaches have encompassed the development of cycling infrastructure in cities and urban areas, as well as soft interventions which, for example, provide people with information, advice, and personal travel planning as resources to motivate them to engage with active modes of transport (Public Health England, 2014). Yet, Spotswood et al. (2015) suggested that the stubbornly low cycling participation rates in the UK reflect a complex and multifaceted dynamic that cannot simply be attributed to individual psychology and instead, presents a social issue. In recent times, however, emphasis has begun to shift from initiatives focussed at the individual level, towards more community-centred interventions as a means of targeting the social determinants of health (Marlier et al., 2015). The overriding point that Spotswood et al. (2015) made is that the factors affecting an individual's engagement with cycling are multifarious, and the solutions should lie in scaffolding opportunities through the development of appropriate social infrastructure, rather than emphasising political individualism. In concurrence, Gates et al. (2016) stressed that professionals and policy-makers operating in the field of health have thus far failed to address social-organisational



and social inequality driven impairments at the community level, and thereby issue a clarion call for a *Movement for Movement* discourse that emanates from the ‘bottom-up’. To this end, NPOs may present a valuable conduit with which to realise such health objectives, with Backman and Smith (2000, p.355) describing them as “an important part of local social networks that connect individuals and organizations and enhance the capacity of communities to solve social problems.” It is within this context that we draw upon resource mobilisation theory (RMT) to understand how the nonprofit-led Pedal Away programmes have been organised, resourced and implemented to promote community-based recreational cycling.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Resource mobilisation theory**

Theoretical thinking around resource mobilisation emerged in the 1970s and grew out of a body of scholarship concerned with understanding the historic social movements of the preceding decade (Jenkins, 1983). The development of the resource mobilisation paradigm allowed scholars to move conceptualisations of social movements beyond the classical model wherein unconnected individuals would participate in collective action to protest common grievances generated by structural strains, absent formal organisation (Cohen & Arato, 1997). Resource mobilisation theorists, on the other hand, view “social movements as extensions of institutionalised actions” (Jenkins, 1983, p.529). To distinguish resource mobilisation theory from earlier traditions in social movement theory, McCarthy and Zald (1977, 2002) identified four basic tenets of resource mobilisation models. First, McCarthy and Zald (2002) argued that participation in a movement does not directly mobilise as a consequence of deprivation, but instead involves expenditures of energy, time and money. Second, RMT explains that movements are driven by rational and organised groups or entities, rather than the irrational behaviour of an alienated individual/s (McCarthy & Zald, 2002). Third, RMT posits that movements must look outside of their collectivities to obtain the specific resources that they

require from the larger society (McCarthy & Zald, 2002). Fourth, McCarthy and Zald (2002) explained that social movements contest authorities for public support, and attempt to draw media attention to their cause to achieve such ends.

From this perspective, and applying these principles, McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) developed the RMT framework to explain movement formation and implementation as led by emergent professional organisations. McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) referred to these entrepreneurial agencies as social movement organisations: organisations that seek to bring about social change by altering elements of social provision or the distribution of opportunities within a society. As professional entities, SMOs have permanent leadership, a staff of full-time paid employees (Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1977), and can take the form of formal organisations such as charities or NPOs (Crossley, 2002).

McCarthy and Zald (1977) emphasise the supply and demand relationship that is central to an SMO. According to McCarthy and Zald's (1973, 1977) organisational-entrepreneurial framework, SMOs may pump prime demand which they then move to supply (Crossley, 2002). Moreover, SMOs are said to operate in a social movement industry within which they are likely to have to compete with other SMOs for precious resources to satisfy public demand for the services that they offer (Crossley, 2002). A similar logic is applicable to the non-profit landscape in England where, in an environment of growing and wide-reaching fiscal scarcity, NPOs are increasingly vying with one another to secure the diminishing resources that are available (Walker & Hayton, 2017, 2018). In the case of Cycling Projects, they are placed alongside various other organisations geared towards health promotion or cycling development.

According to Crossley (2002), such organisations compete to supply a demand for services and are therefore involved in struggles over precious, and often public, resources. It

is in this context that the relationship between power (to access and control available resources) and organisational legitimacy comes to the fore (Crossley, 2002). Legitimacy represents “a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p.574), and if, according to Cohen and Arato (1997, p. 540), “power operates through the conditioning of expectations,” then the ability of an NPO to influence, align with and satisfy the expectations of potential sponsors (or ‘patrons’) is key to leveraging crucial resources from them. Indeed, the ability of an NPO to attract partners and increase resources is typically contingent upon the organisational legitimacy that is conferred to it by external organisations and groups (Walker and McCarthy, 2010). In the case of SMOs, organisations that are “granted wide legitimacy by the actions of other groups, indicated by entering alliances with them” is one of the strongest predictors of a group’s survival (McCarthy & Zald, 2002, p. 548). Such long-term partner endorsement is essential in mobilising resources over the long-term (Brinkerhoff, 2005; Sarpong and Davies, 2014).

## **2.2 Re-modelling the social movement organisation for an inclusive cycling movement**

We arrived at RMT as a vehicle for analysing how Cycling Projects manages and delivers its Pedal Away programmes after first interviewing the Charity’s Director, whom frequently referred to the role and function of the organisation to create an “inclusive cycling movement.” For this reason, we turned to the social movement literature and selected RMT as an appropriate lens through which to examine how Pedal Away is implemented. In explication of our rationale, although Cycling Projects does not operate to petition government or power brokers in the name of social change as would a classical SMO, we contend that its context and organisational structure is closely akin to that of an SMO. It is bound within a supply-demand relationship with regard to forms of resources which echoes the RMT framework (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Furthermore, in resembling what McCarthy

and Zald (1977) referred to as a federated organisational structure, Cycling Projects similarly consists of national and regional offices, yet its Pedal away arm is largely implemented via a multiplicity of local hubs, wherein participants, volunteers and staff meet, mobilise and act together (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

As Cohen and Arato (1997) highlighted, wider application of RMT beyond social movement theory has been limited by the presupposition that collective actions derive from the breakdown of civil society and that movements heavily involve conflict between SMOs. Instead, Cohen and Arato (1997, p. 535) state that it is possible for RMT to be applied to contemporary movements, and in doing so call for theorists to “view civil society as the target as well as the terrain” of such processes.

It is in heeding this call that we contend that Cycling Projects should be positioned as a Movement for Movement Organisation, a term which we borrow from Gates et al. (2016). To reiterate, Gates et al. (2016) opined for a Movement for Movement discourse to facilitate a deeper understanding of how to generate social infrastructure capable of promoting physical activity in ways that tangibly address inequalities in health. We commandeer this movement for movement strapline for the proposed MMO concept as an addition to the existence of a SMO in the RMT framework. Operating alongside SMOs in an SMI, an MMO provides an inverted service, focusing its efforts not upwards on governments and the state but down and within communities and individuals to increase access to physical activity and so to enact social justice through a bottom-up approach that is aligned with broader health goals.

### **2.3 RMT framework mechanics in movement organisations**

There are four principal mechanisms of resource mobilisation: self-production, resource aggregation, co-optation, and patronage (Edwards & Gillham, 2013; Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). Resources that can be self-produced by a movement organisation include the training

of human resources, putting on events, and creating promotional literature (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). It is critical to any movement organisation that external resources can be imported to or appropriated (Crossley, 2002). For example, both money and human resources can be aggregated: the former can be amassed via donations elicited from supporters of the movement organisation, and volunteers can be mobilised to run activities which can contribute to both supply and demand functions (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). Co-optation on the other hand, refers to the scope of any movement organisation to utilise its relationships with other organisations to access or borrow resources which have previously been produced by those other organisations, and such dealings may proffer reciprocal arrangements (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). Resources mobilised through patronage typically refer to monetary transfers awarded to movement organisations by traditional donors or funders such as government departments or national governing bodies (Edwards & Gillham, 2013).

As suggested by these mechanisms of mobilisation, there are various resource types that movement organisations can hope to access, and which are likely to include: human resources such as labour, expertise and leadership; closely related, cultural resources, as in role specific knowledge and competences are also likely to be sought after (Edwards & Gillham, 2013). In addition, material resources vis-a-vis financial and physical capital, such as monetary resources, equipment, property, or office space, are critical to the longevity of movement organisations (Edwards & Gillham, 2013). Lastly, social-organisational resources such as non-proprietary physical infrastructure (e.g. public cycle ways), and access to important social networks and other formal organisations are vital for movement organisations to tap further resources (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). Citizens and inactive participants can be seen as a key resource that need to be mobilised for the growth and sustainability of a movement organisation. Given the centrality of community engagement to an MMO, a group such as latent cyclists are critical to Pedal Away. To engender the supply

of such resources, the movement organisation must endeavour to persuade as many individuals as it can to believe in its goals and values (Crossley, 2002). McCarthy and Zald (1977) presented a typology of social actors whose involvement (or lack of) in a movement serve to influence the scope of resource mobilisation possible for a movement organisation at a given time. First, adherents adopt the goals of the movement organisation, are likely to participate in the activities of the movement and are potential beneficiaries of those activities (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). In contrast, non-adherents are yet to possess an interest or affiliation to the movement, whereas bystander publics are generally indifferent to the goals and activities of the movement organisation (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). A core aim of any movement organisation then, should be to convert as many bystanders and non-adherents into adherents as possible (Crossley, 2002). Second, there are also those adherents who contribute resources to a movement organisation in the form of, for example, pecuniary donations or volunteering, and these individuals are referred to as constituents. It would be favourable for the movement organisation to make efforts to convert adherents into constituents as a means of aggregating resources from its participant base (Crossley, 2002). For an MMO such as Cycling Projects, which has a signal focus on actuating and reciprocating a broad community engagement, this aspect of resource mobilisation takes on greater emphasis than for a SMO.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research method**

We adopted a case study approach to examine how the NPO mobilises the resources it requires to deliver recreational cycling opportunities within the communities that it operates. Researchers have utilised case study research in the analyses of sport organisations from various sectors and embedded within disparate cultural contexts to unpack complex issues and processes that affect their management (Hamm et al., 2008; Jones et al., in press; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Misener & Misener, 2016; Walker & Hayton, 2017; van den Hurk &

Verhoest, 2017). Informed by Stake's (1995) binary approaches to case research, we conducted an instrumental case study using the Cycling Projects organisation as a vehicle through which to examine how resources are mobilised to deliver recreational cycling within the community. To do this, and in line with Stake, we assume a constructivist epistemology.

A constructivist perspective recognises the subjective nature of knowledge, and is thereby premised on the notion that multiple realities and meanings are possible, with the reportage of such meanings dependent on the interpretation of the researcher(s) (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Misener & Misener, 2016). As Stake (1995) outlined, case studies should be appropriately bounded. Baxter and Jack (2008) elaborated that binding the context of the case is important because it ensures that the study remains reasonable in scope. The current study is thus bounded because, although Cycling Projects is a national charity, we solely focus on (a) the Pedal Away project, and (b) its Merseyside delivery network that spans across three of the six boroughs that make up the city region combined authority of Liverpool. Further, Stake (1995) described a case as an integrated system, and to understand the complexity of the case is to also understand this integrated system. Such an in-depth analysis is best gleaned from the perspective of the participants connected to it. Misener and Doherty (2009) concurred, adding that the garnering and synthesis of multiple individual perspectives is necessary for enhancing understanding of the nature of organisational practices. However, whilst case studies typically yield in-depth insights to illuminate the practices and processes underpinning a focal organisation, the generalisability of findings is likely to be limited (Misener & Doherty, 2009).

### **3.2 Data collection**

We made contact with the Charity Director in September 2016. The first stage of data collection was to simply interview the Charity Director to understand the mission and values of the organisation, how it was structured and delivered, and what were the means by which it

sustained itself. We recorded and subsequently transcribed this loosely structured interview. In analysis of the transcript, we honed in on the Charity Director's frequent references to the "inclusive cycling movement" that he perceived the NPO to drive. As a research team, we then reviewed the social movement, and subsequently resource mobilisation literature, before agreeing to use RMT to guide further data analyses and collection. Before moving beyond the Charity Director, we followed-up with him to ask him to explain further what he meant by a movement, as well as to clarify additional facets of the initial interview as a form of member reflection (Smith & McGannon, 2017). The Charity Director granted access to both personnel, participants and other available stakeholders involved with the organisation to further develop the case study.

Due to competing work commitments of the research team, the next stage of data collection commenced in June 2017 and concluded in August 2017. As encouraged by Stake (1995), we explored the case from multiple perspectives to cross-check separate data sources and substantiate the researchers' interpretations of the case. To undertake data source triangulation, we incorporated two qualitative data gathering approaches. First, and in addition to the Charity Director, 15 semi-structured interviews were convened with stakeholders involved in the delivery, management, funding, and more general support work of the Pedal Away programmes operating across the Merseyside-based hub sites. Second, we carried out five focus group interviews with Pedal Away participants in order to understand the participants as a resource in themselves by uncovering which facets of the programme specifically appeal to them.

The participants involved in the semi-structured interviews are listed in Table 1. Each of these stakeholders are referred to by the relationship of their role to the Cycling Projects organisation, and every NPO, local council and the corresponding borough which they represent are given pseudonyms (for example, Council A is paired with Borough A). Two



thirds of the semi-structured interviews were carried out face-to-face, and the remainder were completed via telephone: each interview lasted for between 45-60 minutes.

**Table 1**  
Names (Pseudonyms) of study participants, role and relationship to the charity

| Pseudonym | Role   | Status               |
|-----------|--|----------------------|
| Richard   | Charity Director   | Full-time paid staff |
| Laura     | Development Officer  | Full-time paid staff |
| Stuart    | Public Health Programme Officer (PHPO)                                 | External Stakeholder |
| Graham    | Cycling officer for Council B & and Cycle Nation (independent charity) | External Stakeholder |
| Debbie    | Green Space Ranger   | External Stakeholder |
| Clara     | Ride Leader  | Paid sessional staff |
| Rachel    | Hub organiser and ride leader  | Volunteer            |
| George    | Ride Leader  | Paid sessional staff |
| Ellie     | Ride Leader  | Paid sessional staff |
| Luke      | Ride Leader  | Paid sessional staff |
| Sandra    | Database Administrator   | Volunteer            |
| Gareth    | Trustee  | Volunteer            |
| Ernie     | Adult Day Care Centre Manager  | External Stakeholder |
| Bobby     | Co-director of affiliated social enterprise                            | External Stakeholder |
| Carl      | Co-director of affiliated social enterprise                            | External Stakeholder |

The five focus group interviews (FG1-FG5) convened Pedal Away participants at five separate Pedal Away programmes across four hub-sites (FG1 and FG2 represent separate programmes delivered out of the same hub – this hub consistently drew in the most riders of all the hubs). These programmes were selected based on two factors. The first of these related to ride leader flexibility: as ride leaders needed to be present to open the hubs, lead the sessions, and vouch for the researcher, it was necessary to arrange focus groups whose ride leaders did not have paid work commitments either side of a led-ride in order to allow enough time for data collection to take place prior to their cycle session. The second factor was simply based on the field researcher being able to schedule the focus groups around their work and personal commitments. Consequently, FG1, FG2, and FG were undertaken across two hubs in Borough A, and FG3 and FG4 at hubs in Borough B. We decided that five focus groups would be ample based on David and Sutton's (2011) guidance that more than this

number is unlikely to generate wider insights. This advice was taken as instructive, and the five focus groups consisted of 5, 7, 7, 8 and 5 participants ( $n = 32$  in total), respectively. These participants represented a proportion of 43% (FG1 and FG2 combined), 58%, 57%, and 46% of their respective hubs' regular<sup>2</sup> attenders for the quarter spanning April through June, 2017. To ensure anonymity, each participant was assigned an alphanumeric code denoting which group that they belonged to. For example, Participant 5 in focus group one is coded as FG5-P1. As the focus groups took place prior to the commencement of the cycle rides, their duration was intentionally capped at 30 minutes so as not to detract too much from their recreation time.

As indicated, the questions posed to both the focus group and interview participants were guided by RMT. The semi-structured interview schedule contained a series of core questions based on the Pedal Away delivery model, and these pertained to participants' role; involvement and relationship with Cycling Projects/Pedal Away; their perceptions as to the structure, organisation, and delivery of the programmes; how they would evaluate the efficacy of the management and implementation of the programmes; and what they perceived the main contributors and challenges to the sustainability of the programmes to be. Due to the diversity of stakeholders interviewed, these core interrogatives provided a basis from which to draw derivative questions that were then tailored to internal and external stakeholders, and paid and unpaid personnel. We asked the focus group participants three broader questions intended to instigate discursive conversation amongst participants: what brought you to Pedal Away, why do you continue; how would you evaluate the organisation and delivery of the Pedal Away programmes? Both the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded, and all participants were adults aged over 18 years old. For consistency of interview technique and medium of data collection, John Hayton undertook all

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<sup>2</sup> The NPO classes 'regular' attenders as those who have attended two or more sessions in the past quarter.

interviews and focus groups. John Hayton was selected to do this simply as a consequence of availability over the data collection period.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

All interviews and focus group discussions were first transcribed verbatim. Second, and adopting an approach similar to that utilised by Bruening et al. (2015), deductive thematic analysis was then employed to code the data according to a set RMT informed *a priori* categories. We collectively agreed that the four principal mechanisms of resource mobilisation (self-production, aggregation, co-optation, and patronage) as well as the four primary resource types (cultural, human, material, and social-organisational) would provide the overarching *a priori* categories by which to analyse both interview and focus group data. To do this, we all separately, manually, and iteratively engaged in coding according to this *a priori* framework. Third, we reconvened to review each other's interpretations of the data in line with the pre-set *a priori* categories, before settling on which portions of data would be selected to represent the key RMT themes to be reported in the manuscript. According to Stake (1995), the use of multiple researchers to independently analyse the same data in this way promotes data validation in case study research. That said, the data analysis process raised a number of questions across the research team, many of which pertained to the further discernment of the intricacies of the relationships between Cycling Projects and its stakeholders. To address these questions, we undertook what Smith and McGannon (2017) refer to as member reflections, whereby John Hayton returned to the participants to seek further clarification or elaboration of such relationships. Member reflections therefore present a co-participatory process utilised by the researcher and the participant to expand insights, address gaps in the results, or discuss and interrogate discrepancies concerning the interpretations of the findings (Smith & McGannon, 2017). A specific example of this was when a representative of one organisation would comment on a particular facet of its

collaborative relationship with another, and it was therefore necessary to seek an in-depth understanding of this partnership from the perspective of the other stakeholder of that particular dyad. Once again, this data was audio recorded and transcribed before being analysed in plenary by the research team.

## **4 Findings and discussion**

### **4.1 Towards an inclusive cycling movement**

We begin our discussion of the findings by drawing on the Charity Director to encapsulate the concept of the Cycling Projects charity as an MMO that aims to drive forward an inclusive cycling movement, one which is intended to align with the broader health goals of government:

It's a movement we are creating I think. It's a landscape of inclusive cycling. It's got momentum, and I just feel right now, for the type of work that we do... I think right now there is a lot of momentum for our kind of work, and I think it's a good time for the third sector to start delivering on behalf of government instead of just NGBs.

To understand the organisational modus operandi of the MMO and unpack how it implements recreational community cycling, we continue our discussion by systematically demonstrating how it mobilises various resources it requires to do so. To do this, we apply the core mechanisms of mobilisation and key resource types, both previously outlined, to illustrate: first, the sources of patronage (funders/financial sponsors) that are most salient to the organisation; second, how participants are drawn in by Pedal Away; third, how adherents are converted to constituent personnel that are critical to the programme delivery, and fourth, how partnerships are forged, function and hold together.

### **4.2 Patronage**

Here we examine the ways in the NPO mobilises material resources – namely financial – via

the mechanism of patronage. To enable Cycling Projects to set-up and sustain the delivery of its Pedal Away hub centres and grow its participant base, the charity has sought monetary patronage (funding) from the public health and transport departments embedded within the local authorities that serve the Merseyside boroughs in which Pedal Away programmes operate:

If you take Borough A, it's a public health funded programme. I suppose the thing is in Borough A, the relationship has been a long lasting one, you've got the likes of Council A Public Health and Mersey Travel<sup>3</sup>... so quite a strong combination and I suppose we've won over their trust. We're an example of how local people have benefited from a service that they have invested in. They've seen that we're not just a fly by night; we're not just going to come in and put on a few rides and then leave again and we're also not just going to come in and say "erm, yeah we want it again next year but these are our prices". You know, there's quite a lot of reassurance with commissioners when you say, "the aim with the charity is to support the local community"... I call them a commission, because a commission seems a bit friendlier than a grant personally. (Charity Director)

Edwards and Gillham (2014) highlighted that public bodies such as Council B Public Health specialise in patronage funding, or commissioning, and that the continuation of such funding is likely an indication of an established relationship between the funder and the charity. The Charity Director highlights that the NPO has been able to build the patrons trust in them over time on the basis of their track record of service, organisational integrity, and community-centeredness. As Marlier et al. (2015) acknowledged, the longer the period of collaboration between organisations, the greater the legitimacy that the MMO can expect to receive. More than this, the moral and cultural resources exhibited by Cycling Projects align with the policy

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<sup>3</sup> The executive body that oversees public transport for the Liverpool City Region.

mandates of public health funders, and the charity itself is seen to possess the strategic positioning and know-how within the communities it serves to contribute to the broader health agenda (Edwards & Gillham, 2014). This level of organisational mutuality facilitates the sustained mobilisation of monetary resources from public health bodies (Marlier et al., 2015). However, the caveat to such monetary patronage is that patrons may build conditions into such funding or attempt to influence MMOs organisational practices and the policy decisions that they make (Edwards & Gillham, 2014). Indeed, the Development Officer explains the varying levels of expectation that patrons (in the form of three local authority public health departments relevant to the study), place on the MMO in return for the funding that they provide:

We're tasked in Borough A, it's not harsh but it's very, very clear what we've got to do so, I'd say that Council A get good value for money. We've tried very hard here whereas in the Borough C they don't ask us for any figures really which is bizarre and in Borough B they do ask us for figures but they're not that bothered if we don't produce good results from certain postcodes. So, Council A is very much "we want you to work in these postcodes and reach these areas of deprivation". Whereas you talk to Council B people and they're like "it's great, we've got people on bikes and it's just brilliant". All three of them are separate councils but they've a very different ethos in each council... There's lots of different performance indicators in Borough A... So it's drilled down very specifically. Whereas in Borough B it's just like, "how many people have you had on the ride in these two hubs?"

In this passage the Cycling Projects Development Officer for Merseyside discusses the differing levels of expectation placed on the organisation by the three local authority embedded public health patrons. The Public Health Programme Officer for Council A's Public Health Team expanded upon his organisation's expectations of the Pedal Away

programmes:

I mean they're doing great stuff. I want them to improve around showing the impact. I suppose that's going back to how we continue to fund them and a lot of it is around the stats. Where I want Cycling Projects to show that impact on the figures... We ask them to target the five most deprived areas in Borough A so they will always report back on where participants come from.

Corroborating the Development Officer, Council A's Public Health Programme Officer verifies the areas of performance that he wants Pedal Away to increase and improve upon, intimating the consequences that such impacts may have on their future funding. As Crossley (2002, p. 92) noted, "formality breeds accountability," and as much of the work that Pedal Away does is reliant upon the financial resources it is able to mobilise from organisations such as Council A, Cycling Projects must surrender some autonomy in deference towards its patrons. However, organisations that cede some autonomy and accept a level of external accountability tend to gain in organisational legitimacy, and tend to contribute to higher survival rates amongst NPOs (Walker and McCarthy, 2010). Such restrictions notwithstanding, the Public Health Programme Officer stresses that a positive relationship exists between Council A's public health department and Cycling Projects: "we have a really good dialogue, actually, with Cycling Projects and we kind of give them a bit of direction about where we see the programme going." Misener and Misener (2016) have reported that traditional grassroots sport organisations and public health bodies often struggle to work together to promote positive health within local communities due to each other's discordant beliefs about how sport should be used to effectively encourage the take up and retention of physical activity and recreation. However, MMOs such as Cycling Projects and community-based recreation programmes such as Pedal Away can, as Marlier et al. (2015) suggested, present a compatible platform with which to bridge this cultural gap. Although there may be

an outwardly lack of complementarity, the partner endorsement and proactive communication that is exhibited here assists in creating collective legitimacies, leading to effective partnership working (Brinkerhoff 2005; Tost 2011).

Moreover, the Charity Director of Pedal Away posits that many latent cyclists may not feel an affinity to an NGB and are deterred from mainstream cycling clubs due to the manner of activities endorsed and delivered in such sport systems:

British Cycling and people like that, they've had products in the past which have been very, very regimented "you must book on, you must ride at 11.00 on Sundays, you must be of a certain level of ability and own your own bike ...", all these things which is not what Pedal Away is all about. They know that now, British Cycling, it's interesting that they are realising that their models weren't getting the audiences that were funded by Sporting England and UK Sport to reach.

According to the Charity Director, the NGB is aware that its delivery models fail to attract underrepresented groups to grassroots cycling clubs. Instead, the Charity Director believes that potential patrons, such as British Cycling, perceive that inclusive recreational programmes such as Pedal Away may be better placed to draw in those individuals who find themselves estranged from more mainstream sporting activities/institutions, without having to reconfigure their own operational frameworks (Marlier et al., 2015):

Where we are really exploring stuff is the relationship with British Cycling where they've realised that they don't have to reinvent a programme for inclusive cycling, they can work with others to deliver community cycling rather than what previously seemed to be a little bit about the pursuit of excellence... There isn't an organisation that does a pedal bike programme like us, certainly across Merseyside. So, you may have more success on getting on the back of the NGB, you know, British Cycling and for them to say "right, we'll run with Pedal Away, we'll have that as one of our



programmes” It would be something that we wouldn’t have a problem with if someone chucked x amount of pounds to roll out Pedal Away in some areas. We are looking to do that.

The Charity Director implies that the Pedal Away network presents a commodity to an NGB needing to boost participation rates amongst segments of the population that it has historically struggled to reach (Green, 2009; May, Harris, & Collins 2013). NGBs have progressively been charged by Sport England with the main role in increasing participation through utilising their network of member clubs (Adams, 2011); yet, these institutions are often ill-positioned to overcome internal indifference or active resistance (Harris, Mori, & Collins 2009), or external detrimental social factors (Nichols et al., 2012). Thus, Pedal Away’s advantages makes them well-positioned to be able to negotiate the mobilisation of further monetary patronage from a key player in the UK cycling sector.

#### **4.3 Aggregating adherents**

The beneficiaries of the Pedal Away programmes represent a critical human resource to the NPO, and we discuss how they are aggregated shortly. In order to aggregate however, adherents of the Pedal Away programmes require places to meet and spaces on which to cycle, and so it is useful to briefly comment on the co-optation of physical (material) hub sites and the social-organisational resource of public cycle ways. Thus, at the heart of the Pedal Away delivery structure lies its network of hub centres. Locally embedded within the communities that they serve, the Pedal Away hubs predominantly operate out of council owned community centres where all of the bikes are stored for free. Utilising its relationship with the local councils, the Cycling Projects organisation combine the use of these centres with freely accessible cycle-way infrastructure as the physical capital that they require to provide a platform for the programmes that they run (Edwards & Gillham, 2013; Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). Luke, a Ride Leader, describes both the purpose of the hubs and why they

are important to the delivery of the Pedal Away programmes:

It's the community feel, that community hub is what it is, you can't just set off from the middle of a park somewhere I don't think. You'd never get as many people turning up. You need that meeting place. They're set up to allow people just to stick around afterwards as well. They're a necessity of what's going on.

As Luke indicates, the hub sites provide both personnel and participants a base where they can meet and congregate around the rides, a mechanism which he feels engenders participation. This sentiment was widely echoed throughout the focus groups, and as concisely reported by FG4-P4: "it is a really nice, safe environment where you can meet a lot of different people." As a new resident to the area, FG4-P3 followed on and explained that her local Pedal Away hub provided her with a platform with which to socialise with people:

I just moved to the area this time last year and so I came along to this Pedal Away ride to get to know people... I think the hubs are really important because I wouldn't go out in the street and talk to any of these people here. I've got to make some really nice friends and I wouldn't have done that otherwise, so it is a really important part of it to me.

Furthermore, the organised nature of the hub system proved to be an underpinning feature of participant engagement due to the provision of both personnel and equipment: "because the hubs are set up so well with the leaders and the bikes, it encourages you to come along" (FG1-P4). Likewise, FG5-P1 implied that the group-based and led structure of the programme incentivises her to participate: "because it's organised you make the effort to get up and go, whereas, I have my own bike, but there's times I think, "I can't be bothered". But because it's organised it makes you go."

Indeed, focus group participants commonly highlighted factors, such as convenience and accessibility, as drivers of their engagement with Pedal Away, as enunciated by

participant FG3-P7: “I joined Pedal Away because it was close to me. It was right next door to where I lived. The times were convenient to me, it just got me out and away from the four walls at home.” Similarly, participant FG5-P3 reported that he and his friends had been researching recreational activities available locally and saw the cycling programmes advertised: “We live in like social housing together. And we (three participants) were looking at a computer at things to do round here, and we seen Pedal Away and came here.”

Participant FG5-P4 was also drawn by the close proximity of his local hub: “I was living in a care home and one of the staff members said there was Pedal Away on my doorstep.” Other participants referred to the value of the sessions alongside the provision of all equipment as an incentive to get involved, for example: “I don’t have anywhere to store a bike, because I live in a flat, I couldn’t carry it up and down the stairs all the time. So, having these bikes for a pound is amazing!” (FG2-P4), and “I haven’t got a bike, but they lend you the bikes to help as well” (FG4-P6). Likewise, participants based their judgements of programme value relative to the other exercise choices that they consider to be available to them across the leisure industry: “where else could you get what we have here for a pound? Nowhere. The gym costs a lot more. You borrow bikes, helmets, have experiences, a day out, you don’t have to worry. It’s safe. They look after you” (FG3-P6).

Relatedly, many of the focus group participants conceived only a narrow range of exercise formats that are either available to them or that they are capable of partaking in, yet not many of these were appealing to them: “I prefer forms of exercise that aren’t going to the gym and being really strenuous. It’s gentle exercise without feeling like you have to put loads of effort in” (FG2-P3). Participant FG3-P1 was of a similar mind: “I can’t be bothered with the gym, I like the gym but it’s too strenuous. Whereas I’m much happier doing cycling.” Moreover, participants also appreciated the flexibility that Pedal Away affords them, as articulated by participant FG1-P3: “There’s not pressure to come every time, and so you’re

not letting anyone down” (FG1-P3). Participants preferred to eschew activities where they would have to be in competition with others: “it’s not a race, we can have fun” (FG3-P2). Yet, others took satisfaction in challenging themselves from week-to week: “We all like to know how many miles we’ve done and how long we’ve done it in. It’s not competitive but it’s something we like to track as it gives us a sense of achievement” (FG4-P1). The focus group data therefore demonstrate on the one hand the multifactorial preferences upon which participants base their exercise choices, and on the other, an incongruence with the prospective cycling ‘offers’ presented by and within the NGB-affiliated club system.

#### **4.4 Self-producing constituents**

We now move to discuss how volunteers emerge, or are encouraged to become ride leaders by the NPO. This process speaks to the mobilisation mechanism of self-production as adherents’ transition to become constituents who are then trained by the organisation and thereby bolstering its human resource pool.

Currently, paid ride leaders travel between hubs to lead Pedal Away sessions with the assistance of volunteers from within the hubs, however, as Rachel, a volunteer, explains, the overall concept behind these centres is for them to become largely self-sustainable: “The idea with Pedal Away was to set these hubs up to basically run themselves, or they’re run by local volunteers.” Corroborating Rachel’s comments, the Public Health Programme Officer for Council A highlights that any commissions and recommissions to the organisation are partially contingent upon ensuring the sustainability of this hub network: “The commissioning process for this contract is generally a two year contract and we’ll set the target that we want them to do. A lot of the activity around this was around the hubs and making them sustainable.” To ensure that the Pedal Away hubs and sessions can become sustainable, a considerable emphasis is placed on community facilitation and the volunteer delivery of programmes:

Core to our model are the hubs. Obviously, we're all relying quite heavily on some really good sessional workers (ride leaders) who make sure that the sessions are run well. But we have to ensure that in each hub there is a good pool of volunteers. So there is this model that is more reliant on the community. (Charity Director)

Here, the Charity Director emphasises the role of the community to provide a source for the delivery of their local Pedal Away sessions due to both the financial restrictions of the charity and its sustainability model. As Crossley (2002, p. 88) explains, movement organisations “which draw constituents in, through local groups and activities, should be more stable at the basic resource level,” and so the community embedded and community-led nature of the hub delivery mechanism facilitates Cycling Projects’ reach into local neighbourhoods and boosts its ability to recruit and retain adherents.

The growth of the Pedal Away programmes is proportional to the growth of its participant base, and for the Cycling Projects charity to maintain and expand its capacity for provision, the charity needs delivery agents on the ground and, as Luke, a session leader, states, ride leaders and volunteers are on the “frontline”. The charity’s Development Officer further highlighted the value of the volunteers and ride leaders to the organisation:

The ride leaders and the volunteer leaders are extremely important as we try and move towards a bit more of a sustainable hub structure... In most respects the volunteers tend to be local. So they tend to be better placed for getting local people out riding. And there are volunteers who become ride leaders, so that’s nice, when you can give them a job.

In this passage, the Development Officer extols the virtues of local volunteers, as they are most effectively situated to be able to recruit new participant adherents from their own communities, and this reflects Crossley’s (2002, p. 97) belief that “movements, rooted in networks which resource them, produce networks which will resource them.” Moreover, the

Development Officer adds that a strategy used to increase ride leadership within the hubs is to self-produce trained human resources by persuading volunteers to become paid ride leaders. George, a ride leader, personified this approach:

I just started riding with the hub and it just took off from there. Then last year I did me ride leader's course and became a volunteer ride leader. Then eventually I got asked by Laura (Development Officer) if I would be interested in being a paid ride leader... and I agreed.

In this example, George explains that he got involved with Pedal Away in the first instance to take advantage of the led-rides. George then went on to become a volunteer ride leader after the charity had provided him with training. According to McCarthy and Zald (1997), George had transitioned from adherent status to that of a constituent as he would now provide the resource of ride leadership. George later took on a paid ride leadership role at the request of the Development Officer. Operating from a separate hub to George, Clara had shared a similar experience with Pedal Away, initially engaging with the project as a participant before taking more responsibility as a voluntary and then paid ride leader:

I started as just a rider and automatically fell into the volunteering side of it. The sessions are pretty much run by volunteers so I started to do my volunteering for them. Laura then said "do you want to do some sessional work for us", so I did... It's very much community based and I'm reliant on those individuals stepping up and saying "I want to be part of this process and I want to volunteer." Over in Borough C they have a hub that is pretty much completely volunteer-led.

Clara placed further onus for the running and sustainability of the hubs upon the communities that they operate within and the volunteers that emerge from them, citing a hub centre in Borough C as a case in point for her argument. Rachel, a volunteer from said hub in Borough C, explained how this process materialised:

I just felt that you've got to volunteer, because we got a lot out of it we didn't want it to stop. It was down to us really, to sort it between ourselves because initially the main ride leader from Cycling Projects was trying to cover so many different areas and was so stretched. It was very much down to people in the hub here to organise it... and so Laura helped get us trained up.

Rachel revealed that in her hub's embryonic stages, due to the Cycling Project's limited resources at that time, adherents at the centre had to mobilise their own resources to sustain and develop its own Pedal Away provision.

The various Pedal Away hubs are each at differing stages in their "evolution." One of the hub sites in particular is demonstrably semi-autonomous as it often relies on a core of 5 or 6 trained volunteers to lead rides and self-promote in the local community: "We've got five leaders and put them on a rota. Thanks to Pedal Away we have been put on courses to learn, or teach people how to ride. We've been on first aid courses, so we treat each other" (FG3-P5). In the other hubs, which do utilise seemingly modest numbers of volunteers, there appears to be less of a desire to adopt a greater collective responsibility amongst riders to organise wholly volunteer-run hubs, with participants feeling more reassured and incentivised to take part under the supervision of paid leaders:

The paid workers are excellent because they take the time to look after you. And I hope they don't stop that because it gives us the confidence rather than just having to rely on ourselves. We all support each other but I wouldn't feel confident really helping somebody else. FG2-P5

Naturally, this is an issue that depends on the confidence and willingness of members in the group to take on the responsibility of ride leadership in a voluntary capacity. There was not a strong appetite for supplanting paid and professional riders with volunteers in all but one hub. For example, as Ellie, a Ride Leader explained, although there exists a healthy volunteer

resource in some hubs, such participants are more comfortable playing a support role in assisting paid ride leaders and are less keen on the idea of taking on responsibility as a primary leader: “there are a fair amount of volunteers, but they just want to be in a support capacity, you have got to have your leader.”

Moreover, participants and volunteers recognised that to become sustainable in the long-term, the hubs need to move towards a more autonomous model than many operate by today. However, even in the most autonomous of Pedal Away’s hub sites, and one which possesses a strong core of volunteers, there is a belief that Cycling Projects needs to maintain its oversight of the centre rather than reduce it:

We, for a while, have been quite disciplined as group when we go out: what we do and how we organise it... I still think the charity need to build up so the paid people will come on a regular basis... I think they still need to have a good input. I think it’s a big responsibility to put on to people. I don’t think they can just say “right, that’s set up you carry on now on your own.” It also needs Pedal Away to still be involved in it... It takes some special people to step up to the mark, to carry on and you need a proper organiser. Personally I would not want the main responsibility. I think that at the moment we’ve got a lot of responsibility taking people out on rides and keeping it going, but certainly if Pedal Away stepped back, I’d keep going out with people but as for organising the hub at the moment, I wouldn’t want that. (Rachel, Volunteer from Hub C)

Here, the volunteer from Hub C stated that the responsibility for running and organising hub activities is one that is too great for volunteers to take on for themselves and that Cycling Projects’ resource and steer remains instrumental to the growth and sustainability of the centre. These insights into hub autonomy and programme sustainability demonstrate that the MMO must not only work to maintain formal affiliations with its patron commissioners, but



it must ensure that it consolidates its collective legitimacy in the eyes of its adherents and constituents at the local level (Tost, 2011).

#### **4.5 Co-opting partners**

Cycling Projects benefits from its relationships with associates in ways other than receiving direct funding from them. Here we highlight how the NPO co-opts cultural and human resources, gratis, from like-minded organisations, as well as utilising similar reciprocal arrangements to leverage new participants.

Illustrative of this, Mersey Travel not only promotes the Pedal Away programmes (cultural resource), but also brokers free ride leader cycle training for its volunteers and paid staff (human resource), that is delivered by a nationally operating private cycle training and development company (CTD):

CTD do a bit of cycle training so Mersey Travel pay them to train ride leaders. So if I need one of my volunteers training up I go to Mersey Travel and say “can I have some rider leadership training?” and they contact CTD who then train my volunteer riders but I, if I was to go direct to CTD, I would have to pay. So I get it free. That goes through Mersey Travel. (Development Officer)

Mersey Travel was a former funder and patron of Pedal Away, and Cycling Projects utilise this existing relationship to co-opt this public travel body to access cycle training for their personnel that they would otherwise have to pay for if they approached the CTD directly. This is made possible because Mersey Travel commission the CTD to deliver a nationally endorsed cycling proficiency scheme across Merseyside. In turn, Cycling Projects is able to maximise the benefits from this free cycle training as its ride leaders, like Luke, once trained, can pass on such skills to volunteers and budding cycle leaders across the Pedal Away hub network: “lately, I have been training people up at other hubs.” This represents a form of self-production by which Cycling Projects is able to build its human resource capability (Edwards

& McCarthy, 2004), which combined with the fleets of bicycles that the charity owns, contributes to its self-sustainability.

Cycling Projects have also been able to co-opt a range of human resources external to the organisation to help deliver its programmes (Jenkins, 1983). Green Space Rangers, who are employed by local authorities to get people to use the parks and the green spaces within the boroughs that they serve, represent examples of MMO constituents because they directly contribute resources to the running of the Pedal Away programmes:

We support the Pedal Away programmes by helping to lead or support some of the rides. Because of our role as Green Space Rangers, we get some of our funding from Council A Public Health, so as part of that we can give our help to Cycling Projects if we're available at the times the programmes are running... Even though it's Public Health, it doesn't pay for everything that we do it just helps us to put health activities on... Because a lot of Pedal Away programmes are based at our sites it means a lot of people are using our spaces. And the general public that come to the Pedal Away programmes, we get to tell them about everything else that we do within the park and what's happening in Borough A. (Debbie, Green Space Ranger)

Here, Debbie explains how, as a Green Space Ranger, she assisted the Pedal Away programmes by supporting the delivery of the led-rides. Interestingly, the Green Space Rangers receive funding from the Public Health body within the local authority to deliver such health related programmes, a patron which already funds Cycling Projects separately. In addition, the support provided by the Green Space Rangers further evidences the exchange relationships underpinning RMT, as their job is also benefitted by well-populated Pedal Away programmes which boosts green space 'traffic' (Crossley, 2002; Edwards & Gillham, 2014).

In addition, Graham, who works partly as a cycling officer for Council B, and partly

for an independent charity - Cycle Nation (Pseudonym) - that promotes cycling through a national cycling club network, is charged with bringing together the work programmes and objectives of both of these organisations. To elaborate, Council B's public health branch is interested in increasing the physical activity of local residents, as is Cycle Nation, which also has its regional base within Council B. Cycle Nation however, is also funded by the DfT, who hope that the club cycling network promoted and delivered by this charity will serve as a mechanism that will translate club cycling into active transport:

The similarities in a nutshell, are more people cycling, more often. The Cycle Nation work is driven by the DfT, and they want to see an increase in people cycling, so newer riders, new people getting into cycling, and also increase those journeys by bike, and not just as a led-ride leisure activity, but then to try and take them on a behavioural change process where they start using the bike as a form of transport rather than just a leisure activity. With Pedal Away, as far as I understand, it's just around that leisure activity and the health benefits around that, but with an eye on that next step for those cyclists knowing that if you take them on that journey from a new rider to more of a confident and experienced rider, with some of those riders there will be an inevitability that they will then start using the bike as a form of transport, and using it outside of just that led-ride. (Graham)

In this passage, Graham begins to describe that the work of Cycle Nation, in line with its core funder, subscribes to the behaviour change model underpinning people's physical activity habits. Graham also went on to more perspicuously explain where Pedal Away fits within this model:

From my perspective, because the numbers of participants we were starting to get began to swell, the staffing and capacity you need on the led-rides obviously goes up as well. We focussed on returning cyclists, getting them doing 8 miles a week, but

now they want more, and that left us with an issue when we were advertising what we do. There was a gap for those new and returning cyclists, which those people had once been, if that makes sense. So, we brought Pedal Away in to start up that sort of low-level riding again, that 4 mile building up to 8 mile ride with the idea being that it would act as a feeder to the main group, for the bigger group, but would also provide an opportunity for new riders or returning cyclists to get involved, otherwise we had a gap in our provision.

Demonstrating an exchange relationship, between Cycling Projects and the organisations that Graham represents, Graham highlighted that Pedal Away offer a means of expanding the capacity within in this now joined-up cycling infrastructure. This relationship benefited all organisations involved due to the aggregation of resources brought about by a combined increase in service capacity, and the cycling pathway that it creates (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004).

As many non-public entities rely on local authority patronage and endorsement, the local councils appear particularly influential to both the organisational management of such bodies and the collaborative ventures that emerge between them. Such a dynamic is not unsurprising according to the work of Walker and Hayton (2018), who suggested that the combination of public sector cuts and local authority retrenchment has meant that more and more non-public bodies are having to fill voids in provision for sport, leisure and recreation. Walker and Hayton (2018) added that local councils are thus acting as facilitator and broker of services between non-public organisations as their own delivery apparatus residualises, a trend which helps to contextualise the appetite of local authorities to want to assist and connect the work of NPOs, as the Public Health Programme Officer alludes to: “but a lot of the work that the council is doing at the moment is trying to support the third sector a little bit more and upscale them.”

## 5 Conclusion

In this article, we have used RMT as a theoretical foundation with which to understand how the Cycling Projects charity has worked to mobilise a raft of diverse resources to implement and sustain its Pedal Away product of recreational cycling programmes across a host of deprived communities in Merseyside, England. We have applied McCarthy and Zald's (1973, 1977, 2002) theory to do this by framing Cycling Projects as an MMO – an inverse example of an SMO – whose operational goals are focussed down into the community to increase access to health promoting activity, rather than in protest up towards the state in action against perceived social injustices. From this perspective, the MMO presents a conduit for health and physical activity messages to be propagated and engaged with in socioeconomically deprived communities via the platform of inclusive recreational cycling.

We have therefore engaged with and adapted the four core background assumptions ascribed to RMT by McCarthy and Zald (2002) to align them with the notion of an inclusive cycling movement. First, McCarthy and Zald (2002) stated that it is unlikely that movement participation stems directly from deprived sections of society due to a paucity of available resources, and instead, the mobilisation of participants involves expenditures of energy, time and money. The MMO concept is congruent with this assumption as it seeks to mobilise such resources through the organisation to provide recreational cycling in areas characterised as socio-economically disadvantaged. Second, McCarthy and Zald (1977, 2002) argued that movements require some form of organisation, and that Cycling Projects is organisation-led, has clear goals and provides structured services, conforms to the notion of a rational, entrepreneurial agency. Third, just as movements locate resources in larger society, via, for example governmental institutions or organisations within civil society (McCarthy & Zald, 2002), so too does Cycling Projects, who look to public bodies as well as like-minded third sector organisations to support its goals. The fourth assumption presented by McCarthy and

Zald (2002) offers the key contrast to our inclusive cycling movement framework. To elaborate, McCarthy and Zald (2002) employed RMT to capture power struggles between SMOs and authorities, each vying for the support of both the bystander publics and the reference elites that can directly contribute or serve as resources. However, and as articulated by the Charity Director, Cycling Projects is pitched as an MMO that aims to work on behalf of government to facilitate the broader health and physical activity agenda, and it uses this approach to generate legitimacy in the eyes of local authorities in order to secure resources from them as well as those organisations affiliated to them. Cohen and Arato (1997) indicated this to be a shrewd policy as government resources are more likely to be allocated to the least confrontational movement organisations. Hence, by stimulating demand for their products and services, NPOs such as Cycling Projects are able to leverage participation outcomes for financial investment from public sector bodies whose political and organisational objectives align with the MMO.

Our principal research objectives were to: first, discern the pertinent resources to this operation; second, to understand how the MMO mobilises such resources, and third, to illustrate how the movement legitimises itself within its industry. We respond to these objectives here. Cycling Projects' network of hub sites, typically situated in or by deprived communities, provide physical meeting and storage space, house the fleets of bicycles owned by the charity, and are located in close proximity to freely accessible cycle routes and parks. Setting up the Pedal Away hub system in this way is intended to negate many of the competing commitments which McCarthy and Zald (2002) associate with inaction, such as cost, equipment, and family responsibilities, in order to attract participants to the programmes on offer. To run the cycle-led Pedal Away sessions, personnel are required, and the MMO tries to ensure such resources are recruited from the communities within which the programmes operate. To ensure its supply of trained personnel, it is critical that the MMO

draws adherents into their local hubs and convert them into constituents who contribute directly, either in a voluntary or paid capacity, to the running of the programmes (McCarthy & Zald, 1973, 1977), with gratis cycle leadership training provided via its association with its patrons. As Crossley (2002) posited, MMOs that are able to draw constituents in locally are likely to be more stable at the basic resource level, and this is very much part of the Pedal Away model of delivery. Moreover, funding, vital to any organisation, was sought via relationships with patrons, whilst cultural and human resources such as expertise and labour could be co-opted from Cycling Projects' partners. Often, such relationships are ones of complementarity, mutuality and resource exchange. To elaborate, engaging with the Pedal Away product is appealing to funding bodies because the aims and outcomes of its programmes align with their own targets and objectives. Also, prospective patrons perceive Cycling Projects to be able to reach individuals and communities through the Pedal Away programmes that their own products may not, and may present grounds for an alliance. Partners of the MMO often seek similar mutual benefits, committing resources to Cycling Projects in order to create a reciprocal flow of engagement between organisations with the intention that one organisation feeds the other as participants progress. The generation of such participation pathways mutually contributes to the performance-based conditions of each partner organisations' own funding arrangements.

To this effect, to take advantage of the support of local health authorities and to collaborate with other NPOs, and thus widening the resource pool available to Cycling Projects, the specialisation of function of an MMO becomes ever more salient (McCarthy & Zald, 2002). By this logic, an MMO's capacity to specialise and gain legitimacy as a niche operator that complements the work of other organisations whom share broad general goals will determine its ability to access the wider pool of external resources that such collaborations can yield (Huybrechts and Nicholls, 2013). Gaps in the service provision of

British Cycling and Cycle Nation highlighted Pedal Away's specialised function and cogent role for its programmes. As such, the MMO takes its place as part of a larger multi-organisation apparatus that is united by the broader health and physical activity agenda, and which is characterised by a complex array of symbiotic and synergistic relationships.

Misener and Misener (2017) have acknowledged the proliferation of cross- and intra-sector partnerships to promote health and physical activity, and by locating Cycling Projects as an MMO within this broader machinery evinces the salience of such blended delivery mechanisms to the building of capacity for achieving a movement for movement. That Cycling Projects does not intentionally contest or compete with other organisations, and is instead collaborative in nature, supports their legitimacy when negotiating resources and coordinating with other bodies, and importantly, this ensures that emphasis is placed upon, and remains upon, the participants. For this reason, we contend that the participants of the Pedal Away programmes represent the most critical resource to all concerned – a scenario which, and in times of austerity, places attention, effort and resources on citizens that hail from deprived locales. Aligned to the wider physical activity agenda, this cross-sector distribution of provision (Misener & Misener, 2017) helps to spread the resource burden beyond government/authority bodies.

Due to the congruence between Cycling Projects and, for example, the public health departments of the various local councils that make up the Liverpool City Region, it would appear there exists greater compatibility and complementarity between such organisations than those which Misener and Misener (2016) has reported between sports clubs and public health providers. There is a caveat to be mindful of here, however: as the public health departments of the local council authorities represent key patrons to both Cycling Projects and its non-profit partners, they are ostensibly the crux of the cycling movement posited. Revealed within the data is an underlying reliance by Cycling Projects and its delivery



partners upon various funding arrangements with the local public health body, and in a time of fiscal austerity and public sector funding cuts that have, as Walker and Hayton (2018) contend, blighted local authority provision of sport and leisure services in England, such financial retrenchment could creep further into public health coffers. In any case, by applying RMT through the lens of the MMO, we offer the various potential actors of a ‘movement’ a framework by which to (re)consider the types of resources that they require and the ‘mechanisms’ by which to mobilise them. A key message is that, instead of competing with one another for resources, those organisations operating within the same SMI, such as NPOs and even local authorities, all stand to gain from the reciprocal sharing of resources to facilitate change in, essentially, mutual target audiences. Concurrently this framework provides scholars and practitioners a means by which to either analyse or implement such movements.

The limitations to this research lie in its lack of generalisability beyond Pedal Away’s Merseyside reach, as well as its focus upon recreational cycling. Therefore, future researchers should adopt an RMT framework to examine and compare how other sport and recreation focussed non-profits of national scale in the UK and elsewhere mobilise resources and coalesce their regional operations to deliver their products at the local level. What is more, and as Crossley (2002) pointed out, many scholars who have appropriated resource mobilisation-centred approaches within their research have contended that resources cannot be fully understood without paying consideration to the networks that underpin their mobilisation. While it is beyond the scope of this article to undertake a network analysis of Pedal Away participants drawn in to the programme via the segmented local hub system, if movements, as Crossley (2002) suggests, grow out of pre-established social networks, then the MMO may wish to better understand the relationship between its organisational structure and participant recruitment profile. In explication, Crossley (2002), for example, highlights

the concept of “block recruitment” in the context of resource mobilisation. Block recruitment most simply refers to the recruitment of pre-existing networks of individuals and is purported to be a far more efficient method of drawing in participants to a movement than that of individual recruitment (Jenkins, 1983). This manner of recruitment might present a challenge to MMOs dedicated to raising recreation-based physical activity in diverse sections of the community for two principle reasons: (a) access to relevant social networks presents a limiting resource for latent participants and, (b) the propensity for individuals to mobilise is likely to be stronger where they identify with a social category with which they share homophilic characteristics (McCarthy & Zald, 2002). The concern here is that, if, as Crossley (2002, p. 97) eloquently wrote, “Movements are networks... and they are the very networks that they grow out of... Movement formation is less a matter of agents coming together and more a matter of agents who are already together,” then perhaps participant recruitment undertaken via members of a segmented hub system will further tap into their own pre-existing networks. This may not necessarily present a negative outcome in relation to the broader movement goals of, for example, raising participation, but it may have implications for which social categories are reached and included by an MMO, which may in turn, have ramifications upon its organisational legitimacy as perceived by external institutions and, most crucially, patrons. This issue becomes increasingly pressing considering that chief funders to Cycling Projects have called for the charity to enhance its monitoring, evaluation and reporting practices. Future research into NPOs whose remit and organisational structure is akin to that of an MMO should look to examine the relationship between participant recruitment practices and the networks that underpin them.

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