

The role of identity capitals in the success of the transition to post-sport life - A longitudinal case study of a young professional footballer

Julius Liimatta
Master's thesis
Department of Psychology
University of Jyväskylä
April 2024

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

Department of Psychology

LIIMATTA JULIUS: The role of identity capitals in the success of the transition to post-sport life - A longitudinal case study of a young professional footballer

Master's thesis, p. 52

Supervisor(s): Aku Nikander & Tatiana Ryba

Psychology

April 2024

ABSTRACT

In the case of young athletes, a sports-oriented environment often strongly encourages sports, which may limit their exploration of non-sports-related dreams and career paths outside of sports. A strong athletic identity increases the risk of psychological distress at the end of a professional sports career.

The purpose of this study was to examine what kind of identity capitals the studied athlete had, and how the identity capitals were promoting the transition to post-sport-life. James Côté's identity capital model, which is suitable for examining life transitions in postmodern society, was used as the central theoretical framework. The longitudinal data used in the study was collected in University of Jyväskylä's Winning in the long run -research project. This study was carried out as a case study, where the subject was a professional footballer pseudonymously referred to as Tommi. The interview material was seven biographical interviews, which started when Tommi was in sports high school and which were collected when Tommi was 16-22 years old.

The two main categories of identity capitals were tangible and intangible capitals. Formal merits and support networks formed subcategories of tangible capital. The subcategories of intangible capital were planning and goal orientation, optimism and acceptance, critical thinking, self-efficacy and diverse interests. Within both tangible and intangible identity capitals, distinct factors were discerned to aid in the transition to life after sports, consistent with prior research, despite the novel application of the identity capital model in a sports context. Simultaneous influence of identity capitals and their capacity to promote agency were key observations. In particular, intangible identity capitals were enabling the examination of one's own athletic identity and preparing for retirement and post-sport-life.

The findings suggest that identity capitals have an important role in supporting the transition to life after sports. Moreover, the study's novel application of the identity capital model within the realm of sports research suggests its potential utility for future research in sports transitions.

Keywords: identity capital, post-sport-life, transition, life story, identity, agency

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Psykologian laitos

LIIMATTA JULIUS: Identiteettipääomien rooli urheilun jälkeiseen elämään siirtymisen onnistumisessa - Pitkittäinen tapaustutkimus nuoresta ammattilaisjalkapalloilijasta

Pro gradu -tutkielma, 52 s.

Ohjaaja(t): Aku Nikander & Tatiana Ryba

Psykologia

Huhtikuu 2024

TIIVISTELMÄ

Nuorten urheilijoiden kohdalla urheilupainotteinen toimintaympäristö kannustaa usein vahvasti urheiluun, jolloin ei-urheiluun liittyvien unelmien ja urheilun ulkopuolisten urapolkujen tutkiminen voi jäädä vähemmälle. Vahvalla urheilijaidentiteetillä on psykologisen pahoinvoinnin riskiä lisäävä vaikutus urheilu-uran päättyessä.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää, millaisia eri identiteettipääomia tutkittulla urheilijalla oli ja miten identiteettipääomat olivat edistämässä urheilun jälkeiseen elämään siirtymistä. Keskeisenä teoreettisena viitekehysenä hyödynnettiin James Côtén identiteettipääomamallia, joka soveltuu elämänsiirtymien tarkastelemiseen post-modernissa yhteiskunnassa. Tutkimuksessa käytetty pitkittäisaineisto on kerätty Jyväskylän yliopiston Winning in the long run -tutkimushankkeessa. Tämä tutkimus toteutettiin case-tutkimuksena, jossa tutkittavana oli ammattilaisjalkapalloilija pseudonyymimeltään Tommi. Haastatteluaineistona toimi seitsemän elämäkertahaastattelua, joiden alkaessa Tommi oli urheilulukiossa ja jotka kerättiin Tommin ollessa 16–22-vuotias.

Identiteettipääomien kaksi pääluokkaa olivat aineelliset ja aineettomat pääomat. Aineellisten pääomien alaluokiksi muodostuivat muodolliset ansiot ja tukiverkot. Aineettomien pääomien alaluokat olivat suunnitelmallisuus ja tavoitteellisuus, optimismi ja hyväksyntä, kriittinen ajattelu, minäpystyvyys ja monipuoliset intressit. Sekä aineellisten että aineettomien identiteettipääomien kohdalla oli löydettävissä selkeitä urheilun jälkeiseen elämään siirtymistä auttavia tekijöitä, jotka olivat samassa linjassa aiemman tutkimuksen kanssa, vaikkei juuri identiteettipääomamallia ole aiemmin hyödynnetty urheilututkimuksessa. Keskeisiä huomioita identiteettipääomiin liittyen olivat niiden vaikuttaminen yhtäaikaaisesti ja niiden toimijuutta edistävä vaikutus. Varsinkin aineettomat identiteettipääomat olivat mahdollistamassa oman urheilijaidentiteetin tarkastelua ja valmistautumista lopettamiseen ja urheilun jälkeiseen elämään.

Tulosten perusteella identiteettipääomilla on keskeinen auttava merkitys urheilun jälkeiseen elämään siirtymisessä. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin identiteettipääomamallia ensimmäistä kertaa urheilukontekstissa, mikä antaa vahvistusta myös sille, että sen soveltamista voidaan hyödyntää urheilusiirtymien kohdalla jatkossakin.

Avainsanat: identiteettipääoma, urheilun jälkeinen elämä, siirtymä, elämäkerta, identiteetti, toimijuus

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Identity.....	3
1.2	Athletic identity and early adulthood as a life stage in athletes.....	4
1.3	Identity in connection to the surrounding world.....	5
1.4	Identity capital model.....	7
1.5	Quitting elite sports and transition to post-sport -life.....	9
2	RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS	14
2.1	Research questions and research aims	14
2.2	Research context and the participant	14
2.3	Theoretical approach	15
2.4	Data analysis	17
3	RESULTS.....	21
3.1	Tangible resources of identity capital	21
3.1.1	Formal merits	21
3.1.2	Support networks	21
3.2	Intangible resources of identity capital.....	24
3.2.1	Planning and goal orientation	24
3.2.2	Optimism and acceptance.....	26
3.2.3	Critical thinking.....	27
3.2.4	Self-efficacy.....	29
3.2.5	Diverse interests.....	31
3.3	The connection of identity capital to the transition to post-sport-life in light of previous research.....	33

3.3.1	Tangible resources' connection to the transition to post-sport-life.....	33
3.3.2	Intangible resources' connection to the transition to post-sport-life.....	35
4	DISCUSSION.....	40
4.1	Limitations and advantages.....	40
4.2	Future research propositions	42
4.3	Summary and conclusions	42
	REFERENCES.....	45

1 INTRODUCTION

For athletes, sport often constitutes a significant aspect of their identity, shaping their ambitions and daily routines. Although elite sports and a strong athlete identity suit some, the situation can also be such that sports and the sports environment limit the individual's possibilities and actions. For example, student athletes may have dreams outside of sports, but the sports-oriented environment and encouragement of sports may limit their opportunities to explore different career opportunities outside of sports (Nikander, Ronkainen, Korhonen, Saari- nen & Ryba, 2022). A strong athletic identity is linked to stronger perceived anxiety in career choice situations (Grove, Lavalley & Gordon, 1997), and it can also be problematic when it comes to quitting sports, increasing the risk of psychological distress (Park, Lavalley, & Tod, 2013).

Understanding the dynamics of identity development outside of the athletic sphere and facilitating successful transitions to post-sport life are critical areas of inquiry. Although sports require a lot, continuing sports can often in a certain sense be the "easy" solution when one doesn't know what else to do. Talented athletes have, for example, less career and identity-related exploration than non-athlete peers (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Van Raalte, Andrews, Cornelius, Brewer, & Petitpas, 2017), which is partly due to that athletes do not have enough time to build their identity (Houle & Kluck, 2015). The life of young people who play sports largely consists of training, eating and sleeping, which is not in line with the holistic growth of the adolescent (European Commission, 2017).

In this thesis, one young professional athlete's transition to post-sport-life is examined with a particular emphasis on examining the role of identity and identity capitals. The research topic is significant, because it is important to understand

what kind of things can contribute to a successful transition to post-sport life. Emerging adulthood is a relatively under-researched stage concerning the transition to post-sport life and the application of the identity capital model is particularly fitting for investigating this life stage. The athlete in this case is a footballer, which may also bring out the special features of a competitive and potentially very high-paying sport. In professional football, it is also possible for young players to get lucrative contracts, and footballers may be more inclined to, attracted by the financial aspect, pursue a one-way career path at the expense of education (Thomsen & Nørgaard, 2020).

In this thesis the identity capital model is employed to investigate how various forms of identity capital held by the athlete in question influence the successful transition to post-sport life. Identity capital model can be useful when studying life-course transitions, since it takes into account both psychological resources (intangible resources) and "socially visible" tangible resources of the individual, alongside its incorporation of the distinctive characteristics of late-modern societies (Côté & Levine, 2016).

As far as I'm aware, the identity capital model hasn't been used in sport studies before. Therefore, this theoretical approach is a novel contribution to the literature, and has the potential to expand the boundaries of knowledge in this topic. Case-study approach can also give valuable in-depth understanding of an athlete's life-story and a broad understanding of the identity capitals he holds. Given the novel application of the identity capital model in sport studies, employing a case-study methodology holds considerable exploratory potential for uncovering new insights into the successful transition to post-sport life. Case-study design can also be useful in pointing out sport-specific (football) elements involved in the transition to post-sport life.

The structure of the introductory part of the thesis is formed so that identity is discussed first, after which we move on to examine athletic identity and early

adulthood as a life stage in athletes. After this, the identity capital model that is central to the thesis will be taken under a more precise lens, after which we will discuss quitting elite sports and transition to post-sport life. The introduction ends with a presentation of the research questions.

1.1 Identity

In this thesis, identity and its development are central. According to Erikson (1968) identity can be defined simply as a person's conscious perception of themselves. According to him, the development of identity is a continuous process throughout the life cycle, and this perception of oneself is influenced by life experiences, human relationships, and one's own values and beliefs. In Marcia's (1966) definition of identity, the individual's explorations and commitment to those explorations are central. According to him, an individual can show relative strength or weakness in terms of both exploration and commitment, which can result in four different forms of identity: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. People whose form of identity is more developed (moratorium or achieved) are more aware of their uniqueness (Marcia, 1980). McAdams and McLean's (2013) idea of narrative identity in turn is that a person produces and structures a story about their own life, which creates experiences of meaning and continuity.

Erikson (1958, 1968) describes that identity formation is a process that begins between puberty and adulthood, where the individual begins to find their own agency. In a process that begins when the identifications provided by the family are no longer useful, the individual strives to find their own place and voice through experiences and challenges (Erikson, 1968). According to him, people resolve conflicts in their lives in ways that produce growth and are meaningful as they progress through life stages and perform developmental tasks.

Regarding identity, it is important to remember that it is always formed in interaction with the surrounding society and the opportunities available to people (see e.g. Erikson, 1968; Ronkainen, Kavoura & Ryba, 2015). The identity capital model used in the thesis is strongly based on Erikson's thoughts on personality, so the thesis strongly agrees to portray personality from the "Eriksonian perspective". More details about the personality concept adopted by the identity capital model can be found in the chapter about the identity capital model.

1.2 Athletic identity and early adulthood as a life stage in athletes

Adolescence is a time filled with many normative developmental changes, for example, becoming independent, experimenting with different lifestyles and reflecting on one's own worldview (see e.g. Arnett, 2000). Adolescence is also important time in terms of making decisions about what you want to study or what you want to work with in the future. For young athletes adolescence and early adulthood pose challenges for navigating their athletic careers and personal identities.

For young people who play sports, adolescence means significant changes in the area of sports as well (MacNamara & Collins, 2010; Wylleman & Lavalley, 2004). There are more and more challenges and demands in a sports career. The increase in demands is related, for example, to the increase in the amount of training, to the transition to more demanding leagues, and to how sports become more and more holistic and life-directing (Alfermann & Stambulova, 2007). Usually this transition into elite sports happens from 18–19 of age, but in some sports it can start from even 15 years of age (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavalley, 2004). Career transition research indicates that approximately 80% of young athletes perceive the transition from junior to senior levels as a crisis (Stambulova, 2017), which makes this life stage even more challenging for young athletes.

Athletic identity can be defined as an individual's positioning in the role of an athlete (Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993). The basis of an individual's identity is in sports and he perceives himself as an athlete (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017). A strong athletic identity can have harmful aspects. A strong athletic identity is connected to stronger perceived anxiety in career choice situations (Grove, Lavalley & Gordon, 1997). A strong and exclusive athletic identity is also problematic from an athletic retirement point of view, especially when a sports career ends involuntarily, thus increasing the risk of psychological distress (Park et al., 2013). A strong athletic identity can in some ways be seen as a risk factor in terms of mental well-being.

Talented athletes have in fact been shown to have less career and identity-related exploration than non-athlete peers (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Van Raalte, Andrews, Cornelius, Brewer, & Petitpas, 2017). This is partly due to the fact that athletes often do not have enough time to build their own identity outside of sports (Houle & Kluck, 2015). In the case study of Korhonen, Nikander, and Ryba (2020), the lives of young athletes largely consisted of training, eating, doing homework, and going to school, which does not support the view of holistic development in a dual career (for example, identity formation, thinking about future plans) (European Commission, 2017). Athletic talent can also mean prioritizing a sports career at the expense of educational success (Christensen & Sørensen, 2009). This can be seen as worrying, as exploring and becoming aware of possible future occupational options is one of the central developmental tasks of youth (Savickas, 2005).

1.3 Identity in connection to the surrounding world

When looking at and dealing with identity, it is worth mentioning how it is always strongly linked to the surrounding culture. The same principle applies to sports, as athletic identities are constantly influenced by the surrounding sports culture. The experiences of student athletes illustrate the influence of the sports

environment on young athletes and sometimes sports environment can overshadow athlete's pursuits unrelated to sports. (Nikander et al., 2022).

It is also important to remember that throughout history, people's most central challenges have been related to how to satisfy their basic needs. In post-modern society, especially in Western countries, questions related to identity are central among people. Although opportunities to reflect on identity are a sign that many things are well, the post-war 1950's, for example, have been called the "age of identity anxiety" (Côté & Levine, 2016).

According to Côté (2019), dealing with identity from a very individual-oriented perspective is very typical in post-modern Western societies. According to him, people in in-role societies had practically ready-made identities and the expectations set for people were very clear. He defines today's Western societies that emphasize individualism as identity societies, while in role societies, life is practically defined at birth to certain roles largely determined by the social status of the parents and the family. He also emphasizes how in identity societies the coming-of-age rituals typical of role societies have largely been abandoned, and how the transition from youth to adulthood has been extended to a period of more than a decade.

The lengthening of adolescence offers people opportunities to try out different lifestyles, which offers countless options (Fadjukoff, Kokko & Pulkkinen, 2007). According to Côté (2019) finding a meaningful life and purpose in the jungle of choices also requires using personal agency, combining one's own values, skills and inner potential with possible opportunities. According to him, prolonged adolescence is in a certain sense a double-edged sword: for some, the opportunities for experimentation enable proactive identity formation for adulthood, while for others, the endless opportunities in adolescence can be an endless loop of choices that does not offer satisfaction and undermines growth and maturation.

Since identity development is a key developmental task of youth, adolescence and early adulthood are naturally interesting periods in terms of examining identity development. In this thesis, identity questions are approached with the help of the identity capital model, which can be used especially when looking at life course transitions. More on that next.

1.4 Identity capital model

The identity capital model is a theoretical model developed by James Côté (1996), which examines how individuals can negotiate their life courses in an increasingly individualistic and complex world. According to Côté and Levine (2016), the identity capital model can be used in examining how people manage their own ego-, personal- and social identities. The theory has a strong background idea that in late-modern societies, roles and statuses are no longer determined much by parents and family, and no other normative structures have taken their place. Côté and Levine (2016) also present as an important precondition for the identity capital model that certain context-specific resources are particularly important in postmodern identity societies. The identity capital model can be useful in examining life-course transitions.

According to Côté & Levine (2016) the identity capital model has been influenced by and relies on Erikson's thoughts on identity development, in addition to which the sociological concepts of late-modernity and symbolic interactionist model of identity management techniques in the presentation of self are central to the model. Erikson's influences can be seen especially in the assumption that people try to resolve conflicts in their lives in ways that produce growth and are meaningful to them as they progress through life stages and perform developmental tasks. The most prominent thing about late-modernist theory is how the role of traditional normative structures has shrunk, which means that people have to individualize their identities more. From symbolic interactionism, the identity capital model adopts the idea that people are purpose-seeking, problem-solving and goal-oriented.

Identity capital refers to various resources related to identity construction (Côté, 2005). Côté (1996) has summarized identity capital as what individuals invest in who they are. According to Côté and Levine (2016), identity capital can be divided into tangible and intangible resources. Tangible resources are "socially visible" resources such as individual's formal education, achievements and special skills, which are important above all when "fighting" for group memberships and access to different social arenas (Côté, 1996). According to Côté and Levine (2016), tangible resources include, in addition to the above, also, for example, an individual's social networks, ethnicity, gender and other things that indicate social status.

According to Côté and Levine (2016) intangible resources, on the other hand, are more psychological resources that enable self-reflection and self-understanding and are helpful in personal and social life issues and in moving between contexts that change over the life-course, such as groups and networks. These internal abilities can be, for example, self-actualization, ego-strength, critical thinking, self-respect, cognitive flexibility and self-monitoring (Côté, 1996; Côté & Levine, 2016). Empirical research has shown that identity capital has a positive meaning in terms of, for example, adult-identity resolution, job and salary satisfaction and desired personal development during early adulthood (Côté & Levine, 2016).

The identity capital model and framework has not previously been applied to the context of athletes and their transition to post-sport life. Empirically identity capital framework has most often been applied in the context of youth (Lewis, 2016). In this case study, the focus is on youth and early adulthood, which the identity capital model is well suited for, as it gives a better understanding of life-course transitions (Côté & Levine, 2016). Identity and its development are also particularly central in these life stages.

According to Côté and Levine (2016), personal agency also becomes an important factor for the identity capital model. In discussions on agency, sociologist Anthony Giddens is frequently cited for highlighting the reciprocal relationship between agency and structure. According to Giddens (1984), agency refers to the ability to take action, with less emphasis on the specific intentions driving those actions. He emphasizes the importance of the individual as the decision-maker who can shape outcomes in different situations (Giddens, 1984).

Côté (2019) argues that agentic people are more proactive when it comes to identity formation. According to him, it is particularly important to note the following two points regarding agency: firstly, personal agency is a capacity that varies between people and some people naturally have better capabilities to become agentic. Second, agency is dependent on an individual's life history and especially childhood, and although agency can be taught, it is most useful to start early in life.

1.5 Quitting elite sports and transition to post-sport -life

Stages related to a sports career have been studied since the 1970's, with the main focus being especially on quitting elite sports and transitioning to post-sport-life (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004). In the recent decades major transitions have been in focus: junior to senior, dual career transitions in sport and education, athletic retirement and cultural transitions (Stambulova, Ryba & Henriksen, 2021). Park and colleagues (2013) mention as well how research on more specific transition types, such as the termination of sport of young athletes, has become more common. In this case study, focus is on a footballer and it is interesting to see whether the decision to retire may have been also influenced by the financial opportunities commonly associated with professional football careers. In professional football, it is also possible for young players to get lucrative contracts, and footballers may be more inclined to, attracted by the financial aspect, pursue a one-way career path at the expense of education (Thomsen & Nørgaard, 2020).

Quitting sports is common during the transition to early adulthood (see e.g. Baron-Thiene & Alfermann, 2015; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004), which is natural because both sports career-related and academic demands increase (Sarkar & Fletcher, 2014). Athletic identity is a key factor predicting the continuation of a sports career in adult-athletes (Brewer et al., 1993; Horton & Mack, 2000). Elite student-athletes often encounter challenges envisioning their futures beyond their athletic identity, raising concerns about the constraining effects of elite sports narratives on their life construction and identity development beyond athletics (e.g., Carless & Douglas, 2013; Cosh & Tully, 2014).

When studying career transitions, they are typically structured based on two criteria: life domain in which the transition takes place and transition predictability (Stambulova, Ryba & Henriksen, 2021). Regarding the life domain, the transition can take place in athletic, non-athletic or dual-career contexts (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2015). Regarding predictability, there are also three categories: normative (relatively predictable and in accordance with the athlete's "normal career development"), non-normative (unpredictable, such as injury) and quasi-normative transition (transitions that are predictable for a particular category of athletes (e.g., cultural transitions) with a possibility to prepare for in advance) (Schinke, Stambulova, Trepanier, & Oghene, 2015; Stambulova, 2016). Especially when a sports career ends involuntarily and unexpectedly, and the athlete has not prepared for the end of the career (often by decreasing their athletic identity), the individual has an increased risk of psychological distress (Park et al., 2013).

Park et al. (2013) have summarized the results of 126 studies published in English between 1968 and 2010 regarding the cessation of sports. According to them, the quality of the transition and adaptation to post-sport-life is connected to many different personal and developmental factors as well as being facilitated by pre-retirement planning, psychosocial support and searching for new interests. They separately distinguished factors related to the quality of career transition and

available resources during the career transition. Voorheis and colleagues (2023) did a similar review of reviews, where they summarized barriers and facilitators that affected athletes' smooth transition to post-sport-life.

Park et al. (2013) identified 15 variables associated with the quality of athletes' career transitions: Athletic identity, demographic issues, voluntariness of retirement decision, injuries/health problems, career/personal development, sport career achievement, educational status, financial status, self-perception, control of life, disengagement/drop-out, time passed after retirement, relationship with coach, life changes and balance of life.

Factors that have been shown to be positively associated with the quality of career transition are career/personal development (see e.g. Kane, 1991), sport career achievement (Cecić Erpič, Wylleman & Zupančič, 2004), educational status (Stronach & Adair, 2010), financial status (Lotysz & Short, 2004), self-perception (see e.g. Missler, 1996), control of life (Kane, 1991; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000), time passed after retirement (Douglas & Carless, 2009; Lally 2007), balance of life while competing (balancing studies and sport for example) (Harrison and Lawrence, 2003), good relationship with coach (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000) and voluntary decision to retire (Lotysz & Short, 2004).

Voorheis and colleagues' (2023) findings were quite well in line with the findings of Park and colleagues (2013). They identified as helping factors of the smooth transition to post-sport life: balance of life in time of sports career, positive self-perception and self-control, satisfaction with one's athletic career, voluntary retirement, gradually decreasing training, time elapsed since retirement, retirement planning, support program involvement, preparing for post-retirement occupation, educational attainment, financial planning, social support network, maintaining relationships with coaches, effective coping strategies (e.g., acceptance, reinterpretation) and crisis preparedness.

In their meta-analysis Park et al. (2013) also highlighted four main resources that have been studied during the career transition: coping strategies, pre-retirement planning, psychosocial support and support program involvement. Regarding coping strategies, only searching for new interests and careers appeared to be more effective than others (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007). Pre-retirement planning includes vocational, psychological and financial considerations related to the ending of a sports career, which has been found to have a positive connection with the quality of athletes' career transitions (Warriner & Lavalley, 2008). Psychosocial support includes various forms of support from non-sporting (e.g. family, friends) and sporting sources (e.g. coaches and teammates) and the support may have been e.g. emotional, informational or tangible support. Psychosocial support has a positive influence on the quality of career transformation (Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Support program involvement has also been shown to have a positive effect in terms of life skill development and the quality of career transition (Stankovich, 1998).

A negative connection with quality of career transition has been found with drop-out (drop-out separated from retirement as a young athlete's decision to quit before reaching full potential), strong athletic identity (see e.g. Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007), injuries and health issues (Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008) and life changes (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). Voorheis and colleagues (2023) also listed factors that may be preventing a smooth transition to post-sport life. These were: heightened athletic identity, high perfectionism and comparison, athletic career dissatisfaction, involuntary retirement, amount of other life changes during the time of retirement, despair about future career prospects, lack of coping strategies, lack of social support, lack of transition planning, education and resource dissatisfaction, previous concussions, raising body mass index and onset of osteoarthritis. The findings were in line with the findings of Park and colleagues (2013), although some helping factors were translated into "reverse forms" (e.g. lack of transition planning).

The identity capital model can be used to examine how individuals negotiate their life courses in the complex post-modern world, which can be useful in examining the transition to post-sport life. Among the factors affecting athletes' life transitions analyzed by Park and colleagues (2013), connections can be found with identity capital, both tangible and intangible. For example, educational and financial status can be directly classified as tangible resources of identity capital, while, for example, self-perception and control of life are more intangible resources. The relevance of identity capital becomes apparent during the transition to post-sport life, with the identity capital model providing a valuable framework for understanding and analyzing factors contributing to successful transition outcomes from the perspective of identity capital.

2 RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS

This chapter offers an overview of the research objectives, questions, and methodology. In the first subchapter the research questions and aims of the study are outlined. Subsequently, the research context is described in, and the case-study-athlete is introduced. This is followed by an explanation of the theoretical concepts and choices made in the thesis. After that the analysis of the data is presented. In the last subchapter ethical questions relevant to the thesis and the reliability of the study are examined.

2.1 Research questions and research aims

The purpose of this thesis is to describe and analyze an athlete's transition from professional sports to post-sport life. Particular emphasis is focused on examining identity capitals that the studied athlete has and how those contributed to the success of the transition. Life story research is a frequently used method when trying to understand, for example, people's choices, aspirations and life transitions. In this thesis, the identity capital model was utilized in guiding the analysis of this athlete's life story. The research questions set for the thesis are as follows:

1. What kind of identity capitals did the studied athlete have?
2. How did the identity capitals contribute to the success of the studied athlete's transition to post-sport life?

2.2 Research context and the participant

This thesis was carried out as part of the University of Jyväskylä's psychology department's Winning in the long run research project (Ryba et al., 2016). The main goals of the research project are to investigate the factors related to the successful combination of studies and sport careers and the psychosocial develop-

ment of talented athletes studying in sports high schools in Finland. In the research project, life story interviews were collected from a total of 18 student athletes, who were selected in cooperation with Sport Federations and Sport Academies by selecting international level adolescent athletes who already were involved in senior sport, or were expected to transition to it in the near future (Ryba et al., 2016).

This thesis examines a male footballer pseudonymously referred to as "Tommi". The material used in the thesis is seven transcribed life story interviews (T1-T7), which were collected in the research project in the years 2015-2021. Tommi was between 16 and 22 years old at the time of the interviews.

At the time of the first interview (T1), Tommi was playing football at the third highest league level in Finland while also attending a sports high school. He completed his high school education within four years. By the time of the third interview (T3), Tommi had transitioned to a new team competing at the second highest league level in Finland. At the time of the fourth interview (T4), Tommi had changed clubs once again, and played at the highest league level in the country. At that time he had moved to a different city and was living together with his friend. In the fifth interview (T5), Tommi discussed a recent injury and was showing growing interest in pursuing university studies. By the time of the sixth interview (T6) Tommi had concluded his football career midway through the season. He had applied to university after completing high school. By the time of the final interview (T7), Tommi had taken a couple of gap years after high school, during which he engaged in various employment opportunities. He had successfully enrolled in university and had started his university studies.

2.3 Theoretical approach

The case study serves as a compelling research setting in this context, offering an opportunity to delve into qualitative longitudinal data centered around a single

athlete and his life trajectory. Case studies are relevant when the research questions require extensive and in-depth descriptions of social phenomena (Yin, 2018). With the focus being on the transition from sports to post-sport life, Tommi narrative holds particular intrigue, given that the collected data includes interviews from the time in his athletic career and the time after that.

Case-study approach offers a valuable opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of this athlete's life story and the identity capitals he possesses. Given the application of the identity capital model to sport studies, utilizing a case-study methodology holds potential for uncovering new insights into successful transitions to post-sport life. Additionally, the case-study design can identify sport-specific (e.g., football) elements that influence the transition to post-sport life.

Low structured life story interviews were used as data in this thesis. Life story telling is a complex social practice, involving selection of significant episodes and reflective organization of those into broader themes and narratives (Ryba et al., 2021). Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) suggest that adolescents might lack enough storytelling skills and practice. They propose that by sharing stories from various points in their lives, young athletes can improve their storytelling abilities and gain experience from a specific identity standpoint.

In this thesis life story interviews were analyzed through the “identity capital model -lens”. The focus was on finding identity capitals possessed by Tommi and examine their influence on the transition to post-sport life as evidenced in the data. Côté (1996) mentions that the identity capital model is a very multidimensional and abstract concept, which is why its greatest value is theoretical rather than operational. In this qualitative study, the intent wasn't to produce generalizable statements, but rather to identify and describe the identity capitals possessed by Tommi and their effect on the transition to post-sport life. The multidimensionality and theoretical value of the the identity capital model as well as the

nature of case study research can offer insights that can be helpful as a guide for quantitative research.

This thesis is positioned in the philosophical realm of critical realism, because the aim of the study is to investigate and explain the diverse connection between identity capital and a successful transition to post-sport-life. Critical realism is particularly relevant when examining emerging psychological phenomena within specific socio-cultural contexts (Ryba et al., 2016). While realism historically has been associated predominantly with the natural sciences (Töttö, 2004), critical realism has garnered attention in fields such as the social sciences, often being hailed as a "philosophy of and for the social sciences" (Sayer, 2000). Critical realism originates from the critique of positivism, which asserts that genuine knowledge is limited to strictly scientific understanding derived solely from direct observations and devoid of assumptions (Töttö, 2004).

Life-story fits well with critical realism, as the interest is related to Tommi's experiences of events that took place in his life. Life-story therefore follows biographical events to which Tommi gives certain meanings. Ontologically and epistemologically adopting a critical realist approach becomes apparent when the events that actually happened to Tommi are examined, taking into account the meanings given by Tommi himself to these events in accordance with the constructivist view. The objective is to analyze these interpretations for deeper insight.

2.4 Data analysis

When conducting qualitative research, the goal of data analysis is to condense the data into a clear comprehensible format in such a way that the information relevant to the research questions is preserved (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018) content analysis is an analysis method that can be considered both as an independent method and as a guiding theoretical

framework. According to them content analysis enables a fairly objective and systematic review and analysis of a wide variety of materials. They argue that with the help of content analysis, the collected material can be organized in a more concise form, so that it would be easier to make interpretations and conclusions. According to them, in content analysis, the material is divided into smaller parts, after which it is conceptualized and reorganized into a logical format.

Especially when analyzing data in qualitative research, it is important to keep in mind that different methods of analyzing data are not completely clear-cut and often the methods of analysis are intertwined (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). In this thesis the data analysis fell somewhere between being data-oriented and theory-driven. In a theory-driven approach, concepts are predetermined before data analysis begins, whereas in a data-driven approach, concepts emerge from the data itself (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). Theoretical guidance was visible in a way that intangible and tangible resources of identity capital were already set as the main categories at the beginning of the analysis. Naturally, previous research on the factors that influence a successful transition to post-sport-life was helpful in the analysis and it was used in the classification (e.g. Park et al., 2013). However, there were no ready-made subcategories, and everything that was essential in terms of the research questions was extracted from the data.

The analysis of transcribed interviews is usually started by reading through the material in order to form some sort of overall picture (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). In this study, I did not conduct the interviews myself, nor did I transcribe them, so I began the analysis with familiarizing myself with the interview material. At this stage, preliminary notes were also made on the material. In the next step of the analysis, information relevant to the research questions was separated from the interview material.

The material extracted at this point was classified into two main categories, which were the two forms of identity capital: tangible and intangible resources.

After this step, data reduction was performed with the collected text passages to make them easier to process. Reduction can make the material easier to handle, but on the other hand, it increases the researcher's interpretations of the material (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). It is characteristic of qualitative research that the researcher makes interpretations of the material, and by making reductions at this point, the aim was to make the continuation of the classification smoother.

After the reduction, more precise subcategories began to be formed for the main categories, tangible resources and intangible resources. Two subcategories were formed under tangible resources, which are: 1. support networks and 2. formal merits. In the results section, a detailed explanation is provided regarding the elements that comprise each subcategory. The inclusion of the third subcategory, personal department, was also under consideration. This category would have included, for example, social skills, but the reliability of the personal department assessment based only on the interview material could have been thought to be too unreliable. However, social skills, for example, were included in the category of support networks as effectively establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships and group memberships. Gender and ethnicity can also be seen as tangible resources, but the presence of these factors and their relevance to the research questions did not seem to emerge based on the material. Gender and ethnicity are of course constantly influencing one's life, but in the context of tangible resources these were not included in the subcategories.

In turn, five subcategories were formed under intangible resources. These subcategories are: 1. planning and goal orientation, 2. optimism and acceptance, 3. critical thinking, 4. self-efficacy and 5. diverse interests. Originally, planning and goal orientation were their own subcategories, but from the items collected under these subcategories, it was noticeable that planning and goal setting often went hand in hand. Therefore, for a clearer description and classification of the material, it was justified to combine these into one subcategory. Similarly, optimism and acceptance were originally subcategories of their own, but optimistic attitude

and acceptance were similar enough to form one common subcategory. For example, for the self-efficacy subcategory, the items that depicted central elements to self-efficacy such as confidence in one's abilities and the belief that personal actions can shape one's life path were selected. The subcategories of identity capitals and their contents are discussed in more detail in the results section, as well as the connection of the capitals to the success of the transition to post-sport-life.

Touching a little on the reliability of the analysis, the emphasis on the researcher's interpretations, characteristic of qualitative research, can be considered a subtle risk in terms of the reliability. Hence, it is also important to acknowledge my position as a researcher in relation to the studied topic. I have quite a close involvement with the football world, which has endowed me with an above-average understanding of the subject matter. Given that the dissertation's focus encompasses not only psychology but also a strong connection to sport, my master's degree in social sciences of sport offers valuable insights for this research endeavor. My knowledge in the field, along with access to high-quality longitudinal data and a personal interest for qualitative research, were affecting the choice of case research method and selection of the specific case. I believe that my prior understanding has positively shaped the course of the research.

3 RESULTS

The results section answers the research questions set for the thesis. In the first sub-chapter, the tangible resources of identity capital are outlined and in the second sub-chapter the same is done with intangible resources of identity capital. In the third sub-chapter, the connection of identity capitals to the success of the transition to post-sport-life is discussed in more detail, and these observations are compared with previous research findings.

3.1 Tangible resources of identity capital

Tangible resources were divided into two subcategories: 1. formal merits and 2. support networks. This subchapter introduces the subcategories.

3.1.1 Formal merits

Formal merits encompass achievements and qualifications that can typically be included on a resume, such as work experience and education. In Tommi's case, one notable merit lies in his sports career, which sustained him financially in the latter stages of his sports career. Furthermore, following high school, Tommi engaged in various odd jobs, thereby accruing valuable work experience and tangible identity capital. Amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Tommi secured stable employment at the same workplace, ensuring a consistent income. Regarding education, Tommi successfully completed high school and subsequently commenced university studies.

3.1.2 Support networks

Based on the interview material, Tommi had many kinds of support networks, both in and outside of sports. Family and especially his parents appeared to be a very central support network and the support received from them was versatile. Tommi described, for example, how his parents had always been able to take care of him and they had diligently taken Tommi to practice when it came to sports.

Furthermore, Tommi had received financial support from his parents. Tommi's discourse underscores the profound significance of the support from his parents, and he portrayed his parents as his foremost role models.

"They have taken me to training and pick me up, and have done for many years. And in general, they take care all the time, even though they've certainly had hard times, so I think that's the number one thing, which you have to appreciate very much."

"My mother and father are probably the most important role models for me. I tried to think, if it was an athlete or something like that, but I think that they (rolemodels) come from home."

Tommi's parents' attitude towards his sports hobby, and later towards sports as a profession, was always such that participating in sports was Tommi's own decision. The attitude towards ending his sports career was also accepting and encouraging from his parents, and Tommi also received support from his parents with the decision to end his career.

"... I feel that it's good that I don't get any pressure from my parents. They have always said that if at any point I want to drop out, I can just drop out from it."

Tommi also described how especially his father's role as a provider of emotional support was significant. Discussing the future with his father was important, and his father encouraged Tommi throughout the years to think not only about his sports career, but also about his "second plan" and what happens after sports. His father encouraged him to attend school diligently. His father asked Tommi in a healthy spirit, especially when he was younger, if he definitely wanted to go to training and reminded him that there is much more to life than sports.

"My father and I have talked about this many times, that my career could end at the age of 20 or at the age of 35 or 40, that you never know when it will end, that it won't work

out, or that an injury will occur. He said that I should really go to school well, that I'll have something to work with."

"My father has always been more like, think of a second plan as well."

In addition to his parents, Tommi described his relationship with his older brother as very close, although according to Tommi, they were very different. Support networks outside of sports also included, for example, Tommi's girlfriend and his childhood friends who were not involved in sports at all. After ending his sports career, Tommi said that his most important friendships had improved even more when he had more time to see his friends. Tommi described that he's had friends both in sports and outside of sports.

Tommi has had extensive support networks in sports as well. When Tommi changed clubs and moved to another city to play, he moved into a shared apartment with his friend who played football there. This friend was also at quite the same stage at high school, and along with other support, Tommi and this friend were studying for their matriculation examinations at the same time. Tommi also described that he got along well with his teammates.

Tommi also had the chance to discuss various matters, including the decision to retire from sports, with his friends. For example, one of Tommi's friends had shared his own view on how it is not worth quitting sports just because you don't enjoy it, but that in his opinion there must be something else you want to do instead of sports so that quitting would make sense.

"Now that we've talked a lot, he said that it's not worth quitting just because it's not fun, unless you're absolutely sure, you shouldn't do it. ... Then it's worth (quitting) if you really want to do or something else, so that it's not like I'm going to quit now and do something."

In sports, in addition to teammates, support networks included coaches, a mental coach and other staff members, such as physiotherapists and doctors. Tommi ended his sports career in the middle of the season and described how his coach understood the decision and that he and the coaches and other people in the club remained on really good terms. Regarding quitting, Tommi described that the attitude of the people around him was generally encouraging.

"I still have really good relationship with the coaches and with everyone, so there was nothing like that."

"Nobody has been saying that I'm like an idiot when I did this (quit sports), but on the contrary, everyone has been just like that you are a really brave person when you did that."

3.2 Intangible resources of identity capital

Intangible resources of identity capital consisted of five different subcategories, which were 1. planning and goal orientation, 2. optimism and acceptance, 3. critical thinking, 4. self-efficacy and 5. diverse interests. This subchapter introduces these subcategories.

3.2.1 Planning and goal orientation

Tommi's planning and goal orientation were visible both in sports and in other areas of life. Before ending his sports career, Tommi's focus was predominantly on football, and his goals were heavily centered around sports achievements. Tommi described, for example, his goals at one point to get into the first team and play in the national team. However, getting to the first team was not the final goal, but a step, after which he could get to even bigger leagues abroad.

"...Even if I made it to the first team, I still want to play in the bigger leagues, it's not enough for me to play there, but I want to play in the bigger leagues and with the national team, those are the goals."

In the planning and goal orientation subcategory, the sense of life control and balance was also considered. Although there were many things in Tommi's life at the same time, Tommi described his life in the tone that life was under control.

"There's school, sometimes I have to see my friends and my girlfriend and then there's your family and then playing football like we might have two practises a day, so there's a lot. At the moment I don't feel that I've been stretched out to too many things."

Planning was present not only in sports but also in the school context, and Tommi said that it was clear to him that he had to go to high school. Similarly, when the idea of ending his sports career started to come to mind, planning was visible as preparation for post-sport-life mentally, but also, for example, in thinking about and exploring further education opportunities. Likewise, the goal-orientedness was also strongly transferred to matters related to education and future profession. Tommi also said that he had always thought about what he would do if he stopped playing football. While weighing the possibilities and the decision to quit, Tommi also mentally prepared himself for the fact that there could certainly be moments when he might want to play again.

"If we think that I don't succeed or I don't want to be more successful in football or that I'd quit here and now and I'd like to study. Then I would like to be successful in that area and get a good job. ...the same kind of goal-orientedness in that it's not just about ending up somewhere."

"I know that I would have to get used to it, you know, that it probably wouldn't automatically be like that (clicking fingers), that there would definitely be those moments when it would be like that, that it would be nice to play and train. ..."

3.2.2 Optimism and acceptance

Tommi's speech and approach to things were often tinted with optimism and sense of acceptance. During his athletic career, despite tight schedules limiting his time with his girlfriend, Tommi viewed such moments as even more enjoyable when they did occur. In the same way, for example, with a more unpleasant coach, Tommi found value in the lessons learned. His attitude towards life was characterized by acceptance; if circumstances were beyond his control, Tommi tried not to think about those things.

"As in many other things, you can no longer influence them and you don't know how it would have gone, so it doesn't matter."

The accepting attitude also showed in Tommi as a certain tolerance of uncertainty and a positive attitude towards change. Tommi described his own age and finding his own path as cool, because you don't need to know everything at this age. Likewise, Tommi's approach to big changes seemed to be expectant and adaptable, and he described how the change in quitting football was a big and interesting experience.

"I think this age of mine is cool in the sense that I don't need to know it. ...I am still on my way, or or still searching for my path in my life. I think time will show us."

"I made a big change with football, and you never know if similar things will happen in the future too. Hopefully, well, making such a big change was quite an interesting experience for sure."

In one interview, the focus was a bit more on the corona pandemic and the meanings given to it. Optimism and acceptance of things were clearly visible here in Tommi. Tommi described the corona time as an opportunity to pause and examine in more detail, for example, what he wanted to be and what he

wanted to study. Tommi's approach to the pandemic was marked by acceptance and he also gave positive meanings to it. He saw it as a period for introspection, providing the time to contemplate aspects of life that may have been overlooked otherwise. A realistic and accepting attitude was reflected in Tommi's way of seeing the stress factors brought by the corona as well, but accepting the situation and also describing the new, even positive things it brought to his life.

"Moment to restore and accept and the moment when you feel connected to yourself reflect my views the best (about coronatime). ...It (corona time) has brought many stressful things to my life of course, but I also think that I have survived quite well and also got new things to my life during the time we have spent at home."

The optimistic and accepting attitude was also visible in the attitude towards his football career after retirement. Tommi described how he had no feelings of bitterness towards football or the time spent on it. Instead, he expressed contentment in having dedicated himself to the sport, highlighting the valuable lessons he acquired, including perseverance and goal-setting. Tommi also said that he has been happier since ending his sports career, and that for him, quitting football was the best decision ever.

"For me personally quitting football was the best decision ever, football just wasn't for me."

3.2.3 Critical thinking

Several points indicating critical thinking could be found in the interviews. Critical thinking was shown in relation to both sports and other matters. Critical thinking manifested as self-criticism, as well as the ability to introspect and consider multiple perspectives. In sports, Tommi often scrutinized his own perfor-

mance and acknowledged tendencies to overanalyze individual situations. However, he recognized this trait as both a strength and a weakness. In sports, Tommi used mental coaching, although according to him, many who knew about it thought it was pointless. This demonstrates his capacity to make independent, critical decisions.

"I'm quite critical of myself in many things. It's partly a strength, that I'm not like nothing matters to me, but on the other hand it's also a weakness. I might stay too long, even thinking about some individual situation which is pointless. I mean, there's nothing you can do about it and you'll do better next time."

"Mental training as well. Many people who know that I have gone to talk to them think that it is pointless, that it is of no use. Surprisingly many neglect it, even though in the end it's just about your head whether you can stand to play in bigger leagues, for example."

Critical thinking was also strongly involved in Tommi's decision to end his sports career. In addition to sports, many other things interested him a lot, and especially moving to another city to pursue football prompted him to engage in critical reflection regarding the significance of a career in sports to him. Tommi raised concerns about the equilibrium between sports and other aspects of life, noting that while in his previous city, he had a home, friends, and school, in the new city, football dominated his life almost exclusively. Despite football being his top priority previously, he felt that the other important aspects of his life were overshadowed in the new environment. Tommi's remarks also indicated a growing introspection about whether he desired a lifestyle where sports dictated his entire existence.

"If you live somewhere else, that it's all just one thing, that maybe it (football) isn't such a big deal to me. It could be that maybe it has just opened my eyes, that I have moved to another place and in principle the number one thing is only football. And it

has been before, but when it had everything else next to it, I had been able to balance it with that."

"Everything goes on its (football) terms. ... It seems to determine everything at the moment, I don't know, maybe I think about it differently these days, whether it's what I want, that it controls everything. Or is it so that I could decide more things myself, so it has also started to make me think that there would be more freedom to choose."

Critical thinking was also visible in how Tommi approached his career as a professional athlete, and in his realistic reflection on how far a Finnish footballer has to reach the top of the world. This became concrete in the match played against the Bulgarians, where the level difference was big in favor of the Bulgarians. Similarly, Tommi spoke in a critical tone about how after a sports career it can be difficult to "move on" in life if, for example, if you haven't gone to school and have a family at home.

"... if you think that those Bulgarians were so much better than us, then maybe that made it concrete how long a journey a Finnish football player has to the top of the world. ...it probably became concrete at the time, that I'm still quite far away."

"... who have played all their life until, say, 35 years old and then haven't gone to any school and then it (football career) ends and you maybe have some children and so on. For many people, depression and anxiety can actually occur, that they should get something done and move on and do something sensible."

3.2.4 Self-efficacy

Within the subcategory of self-efficacy, factors such as self-confidence, self-esteem, and elements that bolster self-efficacy, such as diligence and perseverance, were identified. Central to this subcategory is the belief in oneself and the recognition that one's choices can shape their own life trajectory.

In the interviews, Tommi showed confidence in himself in many contexts. In sports, this confidence was evident in his belief in his own abilities and his aspiration to play at a higher league level. Regarding his high school experience, Tommi emphasized the importance of concentration in class, recognizing that it lead to better retention of information and reduced the need for extensive revision later on. In general, Tommi's confidence in himself and his belief that life was under control and the threads were in his own hands was evident in the interviews. Tommi emphasized the significance of personal choice and decision-making, reflecting a strong sense of control over his life.

"I believe, or I'm sure, that I can play (at the highest league level), but it's just a matter of whether the coach puts me on the field, then that's a different story."

"Probably, in the end, it all depends on your own choices, or for sure."

Regarding the decision to end his sports career, Tommi considered how those around him would perceive his choice. He emphasized that ultimately, others' opinions hold little significance, suggesting that if someone takes issue with his transition away from being a goal-oriented top athlete, the fault may lie with them. Tommi showed strong self-esteem and ability to make his own decisions. Regarding decision-making, Tommi highlighted the importance of autonomy in decision-making during the interviews, emphasizing the need to rely on one's own judgement and not only following the advice of friends. However, regarding decision making, Tommi also acknowledged the importance of listening to others' perspectives.

"...What would my old coaches think or what people in general would think about it (quitting football), but then on the other hand I've also thought about the fact that I don't really care what they think. That if it's a problem that I'm suddenly no longer goal-oriented top athlete, maybe there's something wrong with them."

"I've never really chosen anything before because if a friend does it or someone else does it, that independent decision is the most important of all in my opinion."

Tommi's sense of self-sufficiency was being increased by his perception of himself as a hard-working and goal-oriented person. When it comes to sports, Tommi described himself as hard-working, and his belief in achieving things through work was strong. Tommi's attitude towards making mistakes also increased the feeling of competence: when you make enough mistakes, you will learn in the end. Goal-setting and hard work could also be seen in Tommi's preparation for the university entrance exam following the ending of his sports career. Tommi explained how the goal-oriented mindset and strong work ethic acquired through team sports proved invaluable during this period. He found it easy to prioritize studying for the entrance exam.

"I think I'm hardworking and I believe in what I'm training and in what I do, that it will bring success at some point."

"I think it's been beneficial that I have been a team-sport athlete who is used to having goals as well as is capable of doing the necessary work to reach the goals, to make sacrifices and so on. This became visible during the time I studied for the university entrance exam for example. I didn't have any problems to give up all the other things in my life for five weeks and to study for 6-8 hours, six times a week."

3.2.5 Diverse interests

Diverse interests and pursuits outside of sports were clearly on display in the interviews. Key areas of interest included starting university studies, experiencing freedom, enjoying a "normal life" and being with loved ones. A key factor in the decision to retire from sports was the fact that interests outside of sports seemed more appealing than sports and the athlete's lifestyle.

During the transition phase leading to the termination of his professional sports career, Tommi found that while sports still held significance for him in many ways, his interests outside of sports were becoming increasingly compelling. Prior to making the decision to retire from sports, Tommi noted that while football remained enjoyable, he began contemplating alternative paths. This shift away from sports became apparent after his retirement, particularly in his questioning of the "athlete's lifestyle". Tommi described how for the vast majority of the athletes he knew, life was mostly sports and playing Playstation, which did not sound attractive to him at all. Tommi also described how he has not been very interested in sports after quitting.

"Football is really fun, I'm not really saying that, it's really fun to play. ...But then, however, I have started thinking about other doors as well."

*"For the majority of athletes I know life seems to be about sports and playing Playstation and that's it. For me, that kind of lifestyle sounds so f***ng boring to be honest. I am doing entirely different things nowadays."*

In the interviews, Tommi expressed his desire for a more liberated lifestyle that didn't solely revolve around sports. He emphasized his keen interest in freedom, highlighting its appeal in allowing him to allocate more time to cherished activities such as spending time with loved ones, attending communal events like birthdays, and enjoying leisurely retreats to the cottage. Tommi also mentioned an injury he sustained at one point, which afforded him greater freedom to engage in activities with friends. He described this taste of a "normal life" as immensely enjoyable.

"That kind of freedom, it's somehow very appealing, when there's never been anything like it."

"I had a little injury and I had time to go to City B a couple more times and just take it easy and do stuff like that. I saw my friends and went out and so on, so maybe after a long time I noticed that it was really fun, a lot of fun. It just somehow started to go like that when I just had the time to visit City B for a month. Somehow like that, just like you said, to taste the normal, what it is, it was really nice, it was really fun."

One of the primary interests highlighted in the interviews was Tommi's enthusiasm for university studies. He expressed a strong desire to pursue higher education, believing it would bring him great happiness. Similarly, before ending his sports career, he described that if he didn't play football, his dreams would include studying, working in "normal jobs" and living in City's B center. Tommi's interest in a freer "normal life" was strongly on display. Tommi's longing for a more liberated "normal life" was evident. Additionally, he expressed interests in fashion and entrepreneurship.

3.3 The connection of identity capital to the transition to post-sport-life in light of previous research

In this subchapter, the second research question concerning the impact of Tommi's identity capitals on his transition to post-sport-life is addressed. First, the connection between tangible resources and the successful transition is explored, followed by an examination of the connection with intangible resources to the transition to post-sport-life. It is worth keeping in mind that the capitals are not completely separate from each other and have a diverse and simultaneous effects.

3.3.1 Tangible resources' connection to the transition to post-sport-life

Tommi has completed high school, which was enabling and helping him get into university. Educational status has been shown in a previous study to be positively related to the quality of the transition to post-sport-life (Stronach & Adair,

2010). University studies were something that Tommi had dreamed of, and a key element of the transition to post-sport life.

Tommi's parents, particularly his father, played a significant role in encouraging his academic pursuits. Additionally, peer support was available in the form of studying together with his roommate in preparing for the matriculation examinations. Psychosocial support (emotional, informational and tangible) and social support network positively influence athletes' career transitions (Voorheis, Silver & Consonni, 2023; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Also, the supportive stance of his inner circle towards his decision to retire undoubtedly provided validation, easing the transition to life after sports.

Parents have also, for example, emphasized to Tommi as a child that sports is his own hobby, in which he makes his own decisions, which has certainly had an effect supporting agency and independent decision-making. According to Côté (2019), agentic people are, for example, more active when it comes to forming an identity, and although some people naturally have better capabilities to be agentic, agency can be taught, especially early in life. The voluntary decision to quit sports is also a factor promoting a successful transition to post-sport-life (Voorheis et al., 2023).

In addition to his football career, Tommi has accumulated work experience from various jobs and has thus accumulated identity capital in that field. This diverse experience has facilitated his transition to life after sports and has provided financial stability, complemented by financial support from his parents. Accumulating work experience has also helped to map out interests and career opportunities outside of sports, which is a coping strategy that helps in athletes' career transitions (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007). Likewise, financial status and planning are positively connected to the quality of the transition to post-sport-life (Voorheis 2023; Lotysz & Short, 2004).

Tommi's ability in terms of social skills is indicated by the fact that he describes that he got along well with his teammates, and that he has had friends both in and outside of sports. Psychosocial support from friends, which has been identified as a helping factor in athletes' career transitions (Werthner & Orlick, 1986) has played role during the transition phase following the conclusion of Tommi's sports career. Tommi's social skills have certainly been helpful not only in social relationships but also in getting jobs, for example.

All in all, Tommi has enjoyed extensive support networks, both within and outside of sports. These support networks have been a supportive and promoting factor in the transition to life after sports. Similarly, Tommi's formal merits, such as a high school diploma, work experience and enrollment in university studies have been instrumental factors in the transition to post-sport life.

3.3.2 Intangible resources' connection to the transition to post-sport-life

Planning and goal orientation were clearly visible qualities in Tommi, evident both in sports and other aspects of life. The transfer of these attributes to endeavors such as applying for university studies after his sports career played a central role in facilitating a smooth transition to post-sport life. According to Voorheis and colleagues (2023), feelings of despair about future career prospects is negatively related to the quality of the transition to post-sport-life. In Tommi's case, his outlook on life after sports was by no means hopeless but rather very expectant and enthusiastic.

Goal orientation and planning also helped Tommi to maintain a balance in his life between different aspects of life (such as coordinating studies and sports), which has been shown to have a positive connection with the quality of career transition (Voorheis et al., 2023; Harrison and Lawrence, 2003). Regarding this balance, it should be noted that even though Tommi mostly felt that the things in life did not stretch him in too many directions, this perception was shaken when

playing as a professional in a different city. Tommi found the all-encompassing nature of sports to be highly restrictive. Research suggests that athletes often struggle to cultivate identities beyond sports due to time constraints (e.g., Houle & Kluck, 2015).

Tommi also shared how he had always taken a planned approach to quitting football in the sense that he had thought carefully about what he would do if he stopped playing football. Preparing for life after a sports career before quitting is positively related to the quality of the transition (Voorheis 2023; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008). Planning and goal orientation were increasing Tommi's feeling that his life is under control. This also has a positive connection to the success of the transition to post-sport-life (Kane, 1991; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). Similarly, effective coping strategies, such as acceptance and reinterpretation, have been found to help in the transition to post-sport life (Voorheis et al., 2023). Tommi's attitude towards ending his sports career was accepting, and Tommi tried to find and utilize the things learned from his sports career in his life outside of sports. Furthermore, his acceptance of uncertainty regarding the future was evident, with Tommi describing the experience of quitting football as intriguing and expressing hope for significant changes in the future.

Critical thinking was an identity capital, which was also visible in Tommi's interviews. It enabled him to engage in reflective processes, particularly regarding the decision to end his football career. Moreover, it shed light on a characteristic of football: its highly competitive nature and the considerable gap between success at the national level and achieving global recognition. In the world of professional football, young players have the opportunity to achieve lucrative contracts, which can lead them to prioritize their football career over education (Thomsen & Nørgaard, 2020). Realizing the reality that there was still a long way to go to the top of the world also influenced Tommi's decision to retire. Additionally, Tommi contemplated the challenges of transitioning to life after sports,

particularly the difficulty of rebuilding a life later in adulthood without prior educational pursuits. Although Tommi's circumstances did not immediately require such actions due to his age, crisis preparedness and retirement planning are important factors contributing to the success of transitioning to life after sports (Voorheis et al., 2023).

Critical thinking and reflection on his own athlete identity became a significant theme for Tommi, especially when he played football as a profession in a different city, and questioned his athletic identity and the fact that football dominates his whole life. According to Park and colleagues (2013) a strong athletic identity increases the risk of psychological distress when the sports career ends. A strong athletic identity is also connected to higher perceived anxiety in career choice situations (Grove, Lavalley & Gordon, 1997). While various factors contributed to the gradual weakening of Tommi's athletic identity, critical thinking and interests beyond sports played a pivotal role in facilitating his transition to post-sport life. Tommi found solace in experiencing a taste of "normal life" during an injury, and the time during corona pandemic made it possible to think about things that there would not have been time to think about otherwise. These coincidences also certainly had a weakening effect on Tommi's athletic identity.

Self-efficacy was evident in Tommi's interviews in many different areas of life. On a general level, Tommi had a strong sense of control over his own life, and the belief that his decisions could shape his life trajectory. In the context of sports, Tommi displayed self-confidence, for example, by saying that he could play at the highest league level before reaching that stage. In relation to academic pursuits, Tommi emphasized the importance of concentration in class, noting that it facilitated better retention of information. A positive self-perception has previously been found to promote the quality of the transition to post-sport life (Voorheis et al., 2023; Missler, 1996).

Self-efficacy was also increasing Tommi's agency, particularly evident in his decision to terminate his sports career. Reflecting on his decision to quit, Tommi initially thought about others' perceptions but ultimately concluded that external opinions held little significance. If the end of his sports career was a problem for someone, then maybe the problem was more at the other end, according to Tommi. Tommi thought of himself as a hard-working and goal-oriented person, and in addition, his attitude towards making mistakes was such that you learn from them. Positive self-perception as well as self-control has been proven to be positively connected to the quality of the transition to post-sport life (Voorheis et al., 2023). For Tommi, hard work and goal orientation were key, for example, when transitioning to university studies, when he was able to give up other things for the duration of the entrance exam and work hard, even though he didn't succeed in getting into school the first time.

Already during his sports career, Tommi had many interests outside of sports, such as pursuing university studies and a desire for a more balanced and autonomous lifestyle. Student athletes may often have non-sports related dreams, but the sports-oriented environment and the encouragement they receive in the direction of sports may limit their chances to explore other career opportunities (Nikander et al., 2022). Tommi was especially looking forward to starting his university studies, and before retiring from sports, he described his dream of studying at university, working at "standard jobs" and living in his hometown. Tommi's longing for a more liberated life, coupled with concrete plans such as starting university studies and spending quality time with loved ones, played a big role in his transition to life after sports. Effective transition planning, as evidenced in Tommi's case, is instrumental in facilitating successful transitions, whereas a lack transition planning has been found to be a hindering factor in the transition to post-sport-life (Voorheis et al., 2023).

Many of Tommi's identity capitals have a positive impact on agency. According to Côté (2019) people with higher agency are more proactive with their identity

formation. In Tommi's case, his intangible identity capital, in particular, played a significant role in enhancing his agency. However it is important to remember the two-way connection: identity capital can increase agency and agency can increase identity capital. However, tangible resources and especially parental support and Tommi's parents' encouraging of Tommi to make independent decisions were also connected to his agency. Playing football or quitting playing, as well as many other things, was Tommi's own decision. Tommi's agency was making it possible to actively construct a life after sports and prepare for it.

According to Côté & Levine (2016), identity capital has a positive effect on adult-identity resolution and desired personal development during early adulthood. In Tommi's case his identity capitals were enabling the construction and development of his unique identity, which in Tommi's case did not mean the identity of a top athlete. This process and Tommi's agency oriented towards his plans for life after sports, had a significant effect on the success of the transition to post-sport-life. Tommi's identity capitals, both tangible and intangible, were enabling a successful transition.

4 DISCUSSION

The first subsection of this chapter examines the limitations and strengths of the study. The second subchapter outlines possible topics for further research that have surfaced, while the last subchapter summarizes the thesis.

4.1 Limitations and advantages

In terms of the generalizability of the research results, the case study setting can be a limitation. Tommi's identity capitals and their positive connection in the transition to post-sport-life did compare quite well with previous research results on factors that help the transition, but the results of the case study are not intended to be generalized more widely, at least when generalizability is understood only as statistical-probabilistic generalizability. However, this type of generalization often doesn't align with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of qualitative research (Smith, 2018). Naturalistic generalization occurs when readers recognize similarities and differences between the study's findings and their own experiences or knowledge about the topic (Smith, 2018). For instance, in this study, it involves assessing whether the results are credible and applicable to individuals who have ended their sports careers in early adulthood. The findings of the study align quite well with prior research, which provides cues that naturalistic (representational) generalization is evident.

Life-story data can help readers notice aspects related to the studied phenomenon of transitioning to post-sport life, which can be seen as a strength of this study. This study also gave evidence that the identity capital model can be used in examining the career transitions of athletes. Identifying cultural assumptions related to for example athletic identity can also be helpful in building more sustainable careers.

One of the factors that should be taken into account when interpreting the results of the thesis is how Tommi's decision to quit was completely voluntary and took place at a fairly young age, probably before reaching his athletic prime. Additionally, Tommi may have been at a developmental stage where transitioning out of sports was inherently less challenging compared to, for instance, if he were 15 years older. However, the examination of the age stage of early adulthood was a conscious decision, and the results of the case study are indeed descriptive of the studied case. Of course, the results also offer insights that extend beyond the individual case.

The research's perhaps biggest merit lies in its novel application of the identity capital model within the realm of sports and the transition to post-sport life. To my knowledge, the model has not been previously utilized in sports research, and its suitability was demonstrated in this case study. The identity capital model was well suited for analyzing and structuring the life story interviews, yielding results that aligned closely with transition-facilitating factors identified in prior studies. Its successful application in this study underscores its relevance for examining transitions in early adulthood.

The longitudinal data used in the thesis from several years is also something that can be read as a strength of the research, as it made it possible to examine, for example, which identity capitals were emphasized when the termination decision was approaching. The thesis effectively addressed the research questions by categorizing Tommi's identity capitals into tangible and intangible resources, each with subcategories. The analysis of these identity capitals' impact on the transition to post-sport life was thorough and comprehensive, with findings aligning closely with previous research.

4.2 Future research propositions

The successful use of the identity capital model in the context of sport and transition out of sport was encouraging. The use of the identity capital model in the context of sports could be expanded, and for example, examining what kind of connection identity capital can have with the successful combination of sports and studies could be an interesting approach. Operationalizing identity capitals into a form that can be studied quantitatively can be a challenging task, but this could be an interesting challenge for further research. Similarly, describing the success of the transition to post-sport-life by means of identity capitals at different life stages or for example in the case of involuntary retirement could expand our understanding on the topic.

In Tommi's case, chance played a role in his decision to retire from sports. For instance, an injury provided him with the opportunity to experience a more liberated lifestyle, which he found enjoyable. This period, along with the corona pandemic, allowed Tommi to delve into activities outside of sports and explore new facets of his identity. It would be valuable to delve deeper into how young athletes can be better supported in cultivating an identity beyond sports.

4.3 Summary and conclusions

The research questions set for the thesis were the following: 1. What kind of identity capitals did the studied athlete have? 2. How did the identity capitals contribute to the success of the studied athlete's transition to post-sport life? The first research question was addressed by categorizing Tommi's identity capital into two main groups: tangible and intangible resources. Tangible resources included support networks and formal merits, while intangible resources consisted of planning and goal orientation, optimism and acceptance, critical thinking, self-efficacy, and diverse interests.

Tangible resources, especially psychosocial support and education, as well as acquired work experience played a key role in promoting the transition to post-sport-life. Intangible resources significantly contributed to the successful transition from various perspectives. In Tommi's case, critical thinking enabled him to reassess his athlete identity and recognize elements that were personally significant, ultimately leading him to conclude that a career in sports was not aligned with his long-term aspirations. Tommi's critical examination extended to the nature of football itself, acknowledging the considerable distance between Finnish and global standards in the sport. Moreover, his diverse interests beyond sports facilitated the transition by providing continuity in life experiences, such as pursuing university studies, relocating to his home city, and embracing a more liberated lifestyle.

Tommi's self-efficacy as well as his planning, fostered a sense of control over his life. Additionally, his focus on planning and goal-setting extended beyond the realm of sports, contributing to his ability to pursue university studies. Tommi's self-perception as a diligent and goal-oriented individual further propelled him towards his academic endeavors. Moreover, his general attitude towards life was characterized by acceptance and optimism, traits that also permeated his perspective on sports post-retirement. Tommi had no regrets regarding his athletic career and sought to carry forward the positive lessons acquired from it.

An important aspect regarding identity capitals is also how they interplay simultaneously, with their effects intertwined rather than distinct and well-defined. The significance of both tangible and intangible resources of identity capital as fundamental elements of agency is evident. To my knowledge, the identity capital model has not been previously employed in the realm of sports, and its effective utilization in this thesis provides boost to further explore its applicability in sports research.

Although the identity capital model and its components haven't been directly applied to assess the success of transitioning to life after sports previously, the findings align with previous research. Experiencing a more "normal" and liberated lifestyle for a while due to injury was affecting Tommi's decision to end his sports career. Additionally, the corona period provided him with the opportunity to reflect on aspects of life that he wouldn't have otherwise had the time to. These insights, coupled with the understanding of how young athletes often lack time to cultivate an identity beyond sports, raise important questions. What experiences and opportunities are missed by young athletes whose lives are primarily centered around sports and obligations? While this lifestyle may suit some individuals, it wasn't the right fit for Tommi. Ultimately, his decision to transition away from professional sports was the right one for him, with identity capitals playing an important role in making this transition successful. Ending the thesis on Tommi with his own words seems fitting:

"For me personally quitting football was the best decision ever, football just wasn't for me."

REFERENCES

Alfermann, D., & Stambulova, N. (2007). Career transitions and career termination. In G. Tenenbaum & R. C. Eklund (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology* (s. 712-733). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480.

Bamberg, M., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk*, 28(3), 377–396.

Baron-Thiene, A., & Alfermann, D. (2015). Personal characteristics as predictors for dual career dropout versus continuation – A prospective study of adolescent athletes from German elite sport schools. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 21, 42–49.

Brewer, B. W., & Petitpas, A. J. (2017). Athletic Identity Foreclosure. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 16, 118–122.

Brewer, B.W., Van Raalte, J. L., & Linder, D. E. (1993). Athletic identity: Hercules' muscles or Achilles heel? *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 24, 237–254.

Carless, D., & Douglas, K. (2013). Living, resisting, and playing the part of athlete: Narrative tensions in elite sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 14(5), 701–708.

Cecić Erpič, S., Wylleman, P., & Zupančič, M. (2004). The effect of athletic and non-athletic factors on the sports career termination process. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 5, 45–59.

Christensen, M. K., & Sorensen, J. K. (2009). Sport or school? Dreams and dilemmas for talented young Danish football players. *European Physical Education Review*, 15, 115-133.

Cosh, S., & Tully, P. J. (2014). "All I have to do is pass": A discursive analysis of student athletes' talk about prioritising sport to the detriment of education to overcome stressors encountered in combining elite sport and tertiary education. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 15(2), 180-189.

Côté, J. (1996). Sociological perspectives on identity formation: The culture-identity link and identity capital. *Journal of adolescence (London, England.)*, 19(5), 417-428.

Côté, J. (2005). Identity capital, social capital and the wider benefits of learning: generating resources facilitative of social cohesion. *London Review of Education*, 3:3, 221-237.

Côté, J. E. (2019). *Youth development in identity societies: Paradoxes of purpose*. Routledge.

Côté, J. E., & Levine, C. G. (2016). *Identity formation, youth, and development: A simplified approach*. Psychology Press.

Douglas, K., & Carless, D. (2009). Abandoning the performance narrative: Two women's stories of transition from professional sport. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 21, 213-230

Erikson, E. H. (1958). *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*. New York, NY, USA: W. W. Norton & Company.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York, NY, USA: W. W. Norton & Company.

Eskola, J., & Suoranta, J. (1998). Johdatus laadulliseen tutkimukseen.

Vastapaino.

European Commission. (2017). Ecology of dual career – Exploring dual career development environments across Europe (ECO-DC). Brussels: Sport+ ERASMUS.

Fadjukoff, P., Kokko, K., & Pulkkinen, L. (2007). Implications of timing of entering adulthood for identity achievement. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 22(5), 504-530.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Grove, J. R., Lavallee, D., & Gordon, S. (1997). Coping with Retirement from Sport: The Influence of Athletic Identity. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 9, 191-203.

Harrison, C. K., & Lawrence, S. M. (2003). African American student athletes' perceptions of career transition in sport: A qualitative and visual elicitation. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 6, 373-394.

Horton, R. S., & Mack, D. E. (2000). Athletic identity in marathon runners: Functional focus or dysfunctional commitment? *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 23(2), 101-119.

Houle, J. L. W., & Kluck, A. S. (2015). An examination of the relationship between athletic identity and career maturity in student-athletes. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 9(1), 24-40.

Kadlcik, J., & Flemr, L. (2008). Athletic career termination model in the Czech Republic: A qualitative exploration. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 43, 251-269.

Kane, M.A. (1991). *The metagonic transition: A study of career transition, marital stress and identity transformation in former professional athletes* (Doctoral dissertation).

Kerr, G., & Dacyshyn, A. (2000). The retirement experiences of elite female gymnasts. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 12, 115-133.

Korhonen, N, Nikander, A. & Ryba, T. V. 2020. Exploring the life form of a student-athlete afforded by a dual career development environment in Finland. *Case Studies in Sport and Exercise Psychology* 4 (1), 108-116.

Lally, P. (2007). Identity and athletic retirement: A prospective study. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 8, 85-99.

Lewis, K. V. (2016). Identity capital: An exploration in the context of youth social entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship and regional development*, 28(3-4), 191-205.

Lotysz, G. J., & Short, S. E. (2004). 'What ever happened to....' The effects of career termination from the National Football League. *Athletic Insight*, 6, 47-66.

MacNamara, Á., & Collins, D. (2010). The role of psychological characteristics in managing the transition to university. *Psychology of sport and exercise*, 11, 353-362.

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3(5), 551-558.

Marcia, J. E. (1980). Identity in Adolescence. In Adelson, J. (Ed.) *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*. New York. NY. USA: Wiley & Sons.

McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(3), 233–238.

Missler, S.M. (1996). *Female golfers' transition from highly competitive sport: A naturalistic inquiry* (Doctoral dissertation).

Murphy, G. M., Petitpas, A. J., & Brewer, B. W. (1996). Identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and career maturity in intercollegiate athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, 10, 239–246.

Nikander, A., Ronkainen, N., Korhonen, N., Saarinen, M., & Ryba, T. (2022). From athletic talent development to dual career development? : A case study in a Finnish high performance sports environment. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 20(1), 245-262.

Park, S., Lavallee, D., & Tod, D. (2013). Athletes' career transition out of sport: A systematic review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 6, 22–53.

Ronkainen, N. J., Kavoura, A., & Ryba, T. V. (2015). A meta-study of athletic identity research in sport psychology: Current status and future directions. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 9(1), 45–64.

Ryba, T. V., Aunola, K., Kalaja, S., Selänne, H., Ronkainen, N. J., & Nurmi, J. (2016). A new perspective on adolescent athletes' transition into upper secondary school: A longitudinal mixed methods study protocol. *Cogent OA*, an imprint of Taylor & Francis.

Ryba, T. V., Ronkainen, N. J., Douglas, K., & Aunola, K. (2021). Implications of the Identity Position for Dual Career Construction: Gendering the Pathways to (Dis)continuation. Elsevier.

Sarkar, M. & Fletcher, D., (2014) Psychological resilience in sport performers: a review of stressors and protective factors, *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 32:15, 1419-1434.

Savickas, M. L. (2005). The Theory and Practice of Career Construction. In S. D. Brown, & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work*, 42-70. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.

Schinke, R. J., Stambulova, N. B., Trepanier, D., & Oghene, O. (2015). Psychological support for the Canadian Olympic boxing team in meta-transitions through the national team program. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 13, 74-89.

Smith, B. (2018). Generalizability in qualitative research: misunderstandings, opportunities and recommendations for the sport and exercise sciences. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10(1), 137-149.

Stambulova, N. (2016). Athletes' transitions in sport and life: Positioning new research trends within existing system of athlete career knowledge. In R. J. Schinke, K. McGannon, & B. Smith (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of sport psychology*, 519-535.

Stambulova, N. (2017). Crisis-transitions in athletes: current emphases on cognitive and contextual factors. *Current opinion in psychology*, 16, 62-66.

Stambulova, N. B., Ryba, T. V., & Henriksen, K. (2021). Career development and transitions of athletes : the International Society of Sport Psychology Position Stand Revisited. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 19(4), 524-550.

Stambulova, N., & Wylleman, P. (Eds.). (2015). Dual career development and transitions (special issue). *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 21, 1-134.

Stankovich, C. E. (1998). The effectiveness of a career development intervention program designed to assist student-athletes through the sport retirement transition (Doctoral dissertation).

Stronach, M., & Adair, D. (2010). Lords of the square ring: Future capital and career transition issues for elite indigenous Australian boxers. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal*, 2, 46-70.

Thomsen, K. R., & Nørgaard, J. (2020). Grades for goals? Challenging associations between educational engagement and improved football performance among Danish male elite players. *Soccer and society*, 21(2), 152-165.

Tuomi, J., & Sarajärvi, A. (2018). Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi (Uudistettu laitos.). Kustannusosakeyhtiö Tammi.

Töttö, P. (2004). Syvällistä ja pinnallista: Teoria, empiria ja kausaalisuus sosiaalitutkimuksessa. Vastapaino.

van Raalte, J. L., Andrews, S. R., Cornelius, A. E., Brewer, B. W., & Petitpas, A. J. (2017). Student-athlete career self-efficacy: Workshop development and evaluation. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, 11, 1-13.

Voorheis, P., Silver, M., & Consonni, J. (2023). Adaptation to life after sport for retired athletes: A scoping review of existing reviews and programs. *PloS one*, 18(9).

Warriner, K., & Lavalley, D. (2008). The retirement experiences of elite gymnasts: Self identity and the physical self. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 20, 301–317.

Werthner, P., & Orlick, T. (1986). Retirement experiences of successful Olympic athletes. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 17, 337–363.

Wylleman, P., Alfermann, D., & Lavalley D. (2004). Career transitions in sport: European perspectives. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 5, 7-20.

Wylleman, P., & Lavalley, D. (2004). A developmental perspective on transitions faced by athletes. In M. Weiss (ed.), *Developmental sport and exercise psychology: A lifespan perspective*. 507–522. Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.

Yin, R. K., & Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods (Sixth edition.)*. SAGE.