

OLYMPIC ATHLETES' JOB MARKET ENTRY STRATEGIES A Typology

ESTRATEGIAS DE ENTRADA AL MERCADO DE TRABAJO DE LOS ATLETAS OLÍMPICOS Una tipología

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to establish a typology of job market entry strategies among Olympic athletes. Guided by rational choice theory and social reproduction theory, we conducted a telephone survey among 94 athletes (68 men and 26 women). Hierarchical cluster analysis was used to identify four distinct groups, which we called *parallel life strategists*, *freelance strategists*, *lifetime athletes*, and *non-strategists: it's a job*. The results show that athletes from families with greater economic and cultural capital implement career transition strategies further in advance and achieve greater career success and satisfaction. These findings can be used to develop support programs tailored to the needs of athletes according to their profile.

RESUMEN

El objetivo del siguiente artículo es establecer una tipología de inserción laboral en deportistas olímpicos. A partir de la teoría de la elección racional y la teoría de la reproducción social, se condujo un cuestionario telefónico a una muestra de 94 deportistas (68 hombres y 26 mujeres). Mediante el procedimiento de conglomerados jerárquicos se identificaron cuatro grupos de deportistas: estrategias con vida paralela, estrategias por cuenta propia, deportistas para siempre y no estrategias; es un trabajo. Los resultados también muestran cómo a mayor capital cultural y económico de la familia se plantean mejor las estrategias y las posiciones alcanzadas por los deportistas en su segunda carrera son mejores. Estos resultados pueden servir para desarrollar y adaptar los programas de apoyo a los deportistas según su perfil.

KEYWORDS

Cluster analysis; Elite athletes; Second career; Social reproduction; Support programs.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Análisis de conglomerados; Deportistas de alto nivel; Programas de apoyo; Reproducción social; Segunda carrera.

INTRODUCTION

Elite athletes' entry into the job market after retirement from sports has become an area of concern for institutions. Many successful athletes have faced serious difficulties when embarking on a second career (Rosenberg 1980). As awareness of this problem has increased, most countries with well-developed structures for elite sports have introduced programs to help athletes cope with this transition to an alternative career (Anderson and Morris 2000; Ryan 2015; López de Subijana, Barriopedro and Conde 2015). For instance, the EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes calls for the adoption of national dual career programs across the European Union (EU Expert Group 2012).

Preparation for an alternative career among elite athletes has received considerable attention in sociology and sports psychology. Previous studies (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavalée 2004; Conzelmann and Nagel 2003; Lavalée and Wylleman 2000) have treated the phenomenon as a *transition*. Retired athletes do not start a second career overnight; they go through a decision-making process that may or may not result in a post-sports career that satisfies them and other interested parties. The points at which they make decisions regarding future steps have been referred to as "biographical bifurcations" (Négroni 2005) and involve a process of "conversion" (Javerliac et al. 2010). Wylleman and Lavalée (2004) crafted an athlete development model that consisted of four interacting layers focusing on athletic, psychological, psychosocial and academic/vocational development. By incorporating this balanced view of an athlete's life, Wylleman and Lavalée's model reflects "the developmental, interactive and interdependent nature of transitions and stages faced by individual athletes" (Wylleman and Lavalée 2004:517). It holds that an athlete should be viewed as a person who does sport and emphasizes the importance of developing a sporting career in conjunction with other spheres of life. In a very recent study, Guiot and Ohl (2016) analyzed retirement from sports and access to "another" life from the sociological perspective of professional reconversion.

Stambulova et al. (2009) and Alfermann and Stambulova (2007) reviewed numerous studies on retirement from sports and identified four key factors that determine how well an athlete adapts during this transition: (1) the extent to which the decision to retire from sports is made freely (voluntary vs. forced retirement); (2) planning for a post-sports career; (3) type of athletic identity and (4) the availability of personal and social support resources during the transition. Therefore, athletes are recommended to prepare in advance for their second career.

Recent studies (Vilanova and Puig 2014; 2013; Puig and Vilanova 2006) have improved our under-

standing of this transition and of the differences between athletes who achieve a satisfactory second career and those who do not. The basic aim of these studies was to examine athletes' capacity to implement strategies during their athletic career that would facilitate a transition to a second career. According to Vilanova and Puig (2014), some athletes are aware of the distant future and able to take long-term actions to prepare for it and build a career they find satisfying. Other athletes lack this awareness and do nothing to prepare for the future and, as a consequence, face greater transition difficulties. Undertaking a dual career, planning for the future and implementing strategies for a second career gives athletes more freedom in the decision to retire as well as an identity that is less rigid and not based exclusively on competitive sport (Vilanova and Puig 2014; Aquilina 2013; Pallarés et al. 2011). Athletes who take this approach experience a shorter, more fluid transition into the job market as well as more satisfactory emotions (Alfermann, Stambulova and Zemaityte 2004; Torregrosa et al. 2004). The problem of loss of identity as an athlete and the need to build another equally satisfying identity, which is particularly challenging for those used to reveling in public acclaim, is dealt with in depth by Guiot and Ohl (2016).

Pallarés et al. (2011) identified three sports career models: a *linear* model, in which the athlete is dedicated exclusively to sports; a *convergent* model, in which sports are prioritized but combined with alternative training; and a *parallel* model, in which sports and higher education are given equal priority. These career models involve differences with regard to autonomy in the retirement decision, levels of career planning, types of athletic identity and perceived availability of resources for coping with the transition to an alternative professional life.

In our review of the literature on athletes' transition experiences, we found numerous studies on retirement from sports and the quality of athletes' adaptation to the transition (Alfermann, Stambulova and Zemaityte 2004; Sinclair and Orlick 1993; Taylor and Ogilvie 1994). However, few studies have focused on job market entry (Pallarés et al. 2011; Vilanova and Puig 2014; Conzelmann and Nagel 2003) and very few have proposed a typology of the job market entry strategies used by elite athletes. While the work of Guiot and Ohl (2016) addresses typologies, these are not focused on access to the job market but rather on the different ways of reconstructing an identity following retirement from sports.

A proper typology of the various possible situations could help career transition programs to provide athletes' with more individualized assistance and increase their chances of success in their second career.

The use of typologies has a long tradition in sociology. Max Weber (1922/1990) and Emile Durkheim (1895/1984) suggested methodological proposals

which illustrated the usefulness of establishing typologies as a means of conceptually organizing the behaviors of people and social groups or various other social phenomena. Typologies such as Weber's (1990) *ideal types* and Boudon and Lazarsfeld's (1977) *attribute spaces* are useful for determining the theoretical frameworks of studies; a process that involves deductive procedures. They are also extremely useful in the analysis of empirical research results because they show the various ways in which a single phenomenon can unfold (Díaz 2011; García and Ibañez 2013).

The aim of this study was to establish a typology of the strategies used by Olympic athletes and the agents who influence them in the transition to a second career.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

For this study, we used two theoretical perspectives: rational choice theory and the theory of social reproduction. One way of gaining insight into the mechanisms required for explanation can be to combine various approaches. These two theories are often seen as being in conflict but, as Vester (2006) has pointed out, they can also fruitfully be used together. Swartz (1981) argued that while there are important differences between the two approaches, they have much in common, including their focus on individual actors and their attention to socio-economic structure, as well as to the ways in which interacting factors produce social phenomena.

Rational choice theory, also known as rational action theory, gives us the necessary perspective to understand the rational—or irrational—mechanisms that drive human decision making. This theory also sheds light on the strategies that some people implement when making decisions with long-term consequences, such as the one examined in this study (preparation for a second career). Rational choice theory operates on the principle that individuals are rational beings with limitations and are able to weigh up the risks, benefits and effort associated with particular courses of behavior in specific situations (Clarke and Felson 1993). Decisions to engage in specific courses of action are motivated, in part, by individual needs (Clarke and Felson 1993).

According to Been and Goldthorpe (1997), perceived costs, benefits and risks depend partly on the family's social background, and as indicated by Goldthorpe (2007), an important motive is at least to maintain one's socio-occupational status relative to the family of origin. Given this status maintenance goal, individuals' levels of aspiration need to be understood not only in terms of the absolute value of qualifications aimed at, but also in terms of their relation to individuals' social starting points.

In real life, this highly rational way of acting is obviously the exception, not the rule (Cristiano 2006:138; Bourdieu 1980). Krugman and Wells (2008) argued that nobody makes decisions this way—not even Nobel laureates. Nevertheless, the concept of rational behavior helps us to understand how people make decisions because it is an idealized representation of what really happens (Krugman and Wells 2008). Rational choice theory is therefore useful in explaining people's behavior, decisions, actions and strategies.

Mintzberg, Quinn and Voyer (1997:3) defined strategy as "the pattern of a set of actions that succeed each other in time." Strategy is a pattern; it lends coherence to behavior planned over time, either in the past or the future. It essentially consists of actions planned with awareness of time.

For the purposes of this study, we consider that strategy establishes a direction and helps set the course of a sport job market entry, enabling athletes to navigate the environment coherently. To understand an athlete's strategy, we must analyze both the person and the surrounding context (Mintzberg, Lampeland and Ahlstrand 1999:31).

Bourdieu argued that people are subjectively conditioned by a system of acquired dispositions known as the *habitus*, defined as "an acquired system of generative schemes" (Bourdieu 1980:92) and "a system of lasting dispositions" (Bourdieu 1980:88). The habitus causes people from a homogeneous social environment to tend to have similar lifestyles by means of a system of practice-generating principles, appraisals and perceptions incorporated over a lifetime. This system fundamentally manifests itself in people's attitudes and ways of moving, acting, feeling and orienting themselves, and it has to do with the places people occupy in the space of social positions.

According to Bourdieu, the social space is a system of positions defined in relation to one another. The value of a position is measured in terms of the social distance separating it from higher and lower positions. The social space is a system of social differences organized hierarchically (distinction) according to system of legitimacies that are socially established and recognized at a given time. The place a person occupies in the social space determines his or her levels of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital, which are reproduced by the habitus (Bourdieu, 1980).

Actions constrained or enabled by habitus have their roots in past experiences, which consequently shape expectations. Habitus has an influence on which goals are considered desirable or reasonable per se. In addition, a course of action is not merely chosen according to how likely it is to lead to an outcome, but also according to the subjective estimation of the likelihood of success. Such estimations reflect previous collective experience within the class of origin (Glaesser and Cooper 2014).

Rational choice theory is the prism through which we understand the sets of actions planned by athletes over time—in other words, their strategies. Theory of social reproduction allows us to understand each athlete's social context and their reasons for implementing—or failing to implement—strategies. The two aforementioned theories have therefore allowed us to establish the typology described in the following sections.

METHOD

In order to establish a typology of the strategies used by Olympic athletes and the agents who influence them in the transition to a second career, a telephone survey was conducted.

Participants

The survey respondents were former athletes who had taken part in the Barcelona, Atlanta, Sydney or Athens Olympic Games and who were currently working and living in Catalonia. The majority of the athletes were born in Catalonia but some of them were born in other autonomous communities of Spain. The study population was homogeneous in terms of former career and current job market characteristics. Structural homogeneity across the population was guaranteed by the fact that all the members had participated in at least one Olympic Games, meaning that they had followed very similar athletic careers within a similar institutional structure. The target population comprised 144 former Olympic athletes (99 men and 45 women), of whom 94 (68 men and 26 women), aged between 23 and 58 years old, took part in the telephone survey. Twenty different sports were represented; 46 athletes had participated in more professionalized sports, such as tennis and handball, while 48 had participated in less professionalized sports, such as fencing and rowing. Considering that the target sample consisted of 144 former athletes, the maximum margin of error for the survey was 5.98% for a confidence level of 95% and $p = q = .5$.

Instrument

A telephone survey among former Olympic athletes was conducted. Due to the scarcity of studies on this topic, in-depth interviews were first conducted to identify attitudes regarding the implementation (or not) of such strategies. The telephone survey consisted of 48 questions divided into different subject areas, which are shown in the order in which they were asked in Table I. The full version can be consulted in Vilanova (2009: 230-246).

Structure of telephone survey

All the surveys were conducted by one of the authors of this article and lasted an average of 15 minutes.

Table I. Structure of telephone survey

Variable	Questions
Initial contextualization	Q1-Q5
Actions, individual and contextual factors	Q6-Q29
Formal and informal education and training	Q6-Q17
Savings	Q18-Q18d
Planning for retirement	Q19-Q22
Voluntary work and work placements	Q23-Q24
Start of second career	Q25-Q27
Participation in support programs	Q28-Q28d
Awareness of future	Q29-Q29f
Current situation after termination of sports career	Q30-Q41
Personal and socio-statistical data	Q42-Q48

Hierarchical cluster analysis

Relatively homogeneous groups were formed by hierarchical cluster analysis using an agglomerative algorithm in which each cluster started with a single case (or variable). Cases were merged from the bottom up until just one cluster was left. Following multiple tests with potential variables, educational level and profession were selected to build the hierarchy. Although other variables were added, the clusters were formed from these two variables.

A dendrogram was used to assess cluster cohesion and determine how many clusters to retain. Details of the full statistical analysis are given on Vilanova (2009: 247-254). The analysis resulted in four categories or profiles related to how Olympic athletes prepare for entering the job market following termination of their athletic careers.

RESULTS

Job market entry categories: strategists vs. non-strategists

The four categories identified in the hierarchical cluster analysis reflect four distinct paths taken by athletes prior to entering the job market. Athletes needed an average of 3.18 years ($SD=2.56$) to adapt to their new situation following retirement from sport. We have called these categories *parallel life strategists* (directors, skilled professionals, technicians and middle managers); *freelance strategists* (small business owners); *lifetime athletes* (coaches and middle managers in the sports sector); and *non-strategists: it's a job* (office workers, workers in the services sector and skilled laborers). The names of the categories reflect their main characteristics and were inspired by comments noted down by the interviewers during the telephone surveys; namely, "I had to lead a parallel life;" "I like working on my own and don't like being

told what to do;” “I will always stay in the world of sport;” and “A job is a job.”

The number and percentage of former athletes in each of the four categories are shown in Table II.

Table II. *Athlete job market entry categories*

	n	%
1. Parallel life strategists (directors, professionals, technicians and middle managers)	48	51.1
2. Freelance strategists (small business owners)	11	11.7
3. Lifetime athletes (coaches)	14	14.9
4. Non-strategists: it's a job (office/services sector workers and skilled laborers)	21	22.3
Total	94	100

In the following section, we describe and compare each of the categories. Table III summarizes the main characteristics of the four categories.

Parallel life strategists

The parallel life strategist category was the largest group with 48 former athletes (51.1% of the total), of which 43.8% were aged between 34 and 39 years old at the time of the survey. They were working as directors or skilled professionals (43.3%) or as technicians or middle managers (56.7%). Twenty (41.5%) had sports-related jobs, although this proportion was higher at the beginning of their second careers (56.3%), thus indicating a change in activity over time.

The overall level of job satisfaction was very high, with 95.8% stating they were happy with their jobs.

The parallel life strategist group was also the group with the highest proportion of university studies (87.6%). The remaining 12.4% all had a secondary education. A similar pattern was observed in the athletes' families, where 41.6% of parents (father and/or mother) had a third-level education. Under 20% of parents in the other three categories had university studies. Family had a strong influence on readiness for the future in this category. Two-thirds of the athletes stated that their parents had had a positive influence on their education. At the same time, however, they complained about the little support received from agents in the sports sector (e.g., coaches, managers), with only 18.8% claiming they had felt supported.

The parallel life strategist category also contained the highest proportion of former athletes who claimed that they had been aware of the future during their athletic careers (89.6%). Furthermore, 83.3% stated that they had taken various actions to prepare for it; 68.8% mentioned that they had been aware of the future during their time as an athlete, while 27.1% said that they had only started to think about it towards the end. Just 4.2% admitted that they had never thought about the future. This high level of awareness of a life beyond sport probably explains why 50% of the athletes in this category said they had adapted quickly to a new life once their sports career had ended. The same proportion said that they missed sport when they retired, but this figure had dropped to 35.4% by the time of the survey. Similar figures were seen in the freelance strategist category.

Table III. *Characteristics of four categories identified*

Parallel life strategists	Freelance strategists
Directors, professionals, technicians and middle managers	Small business owners
Strong awareness of the future	Awareness of future
Positive family influence	Positive family influence
University education	University education
Multiple actions taken to prepare for a second career	Multiple actions taken to prepare for a second career
Voluntary retirement from sport	Career in a professionalized sport (opportunity to save)
	Voluntary retirement from sport
Lifetime athletes	Non-strategists: it's a job
Coaches	Office workers, workers in the services sector and skilled laborers
Lower level of job satisfaction	Secondary education
Secondary education	Considerable support from the family regarding the future and no support from sports agents
Family indifference towards future	Little awareness of the future
Little awareness of the future	Few actions taken to prepare for the future
Few actions taken to prepare for the future	Voluntary retirement from sport
Involuntary retirement from sport	No longing for sport
Nostalgia, longing for sport	

Just over a third of the former athletes in this group (35.4%) had been involved in professionalized sports, which probably explains why 58.3% had been able to save for the future. They used their savings for various purposes, including making a down payment on a home, paying for private university tuition or starting a business.

Two-thirds of respondents stated that they had retired voluntarily from sport, either because they had found a good job or had finished their studies. This is consistent with their long-term plans for building a second career for themselves.

It is also noteworthy that 57.1% of the respondents in this category had done voluntary work during their time as athletes (e.g., campus/camp jobs, coaching, management, talks to young athletes) with the aim of becoming familiar with the job market. This group also contained the highest proportion of athletes who took advantage of career transition programs organized by Catalan and Spanish sports institutions (18.7%).

Freelance strategists

There were 11 former athletes (4 women, 36.4%) in the freelance strategist category. At the time of the survey, 45% were aged between 35 and 39 years and 36% were over 40. They were all small business owners.

Although 72.7% of the group had started out working in the sports sector, just 36.5% were still in this sector at the time of the interview. They had started by giving beginners' classes or training. They had different plans for the future, however, and as soon as the opportunity arose, they started their own business. Just over a third of participants (36.3%) were from families with a family business. This category contained the highest proportion of former athletes who mentioned the importance of the relationships they had built in the sports sector for their second careers (72.2%). For example, one woman who owned a travel agency said at the end of the interview that she was well equipped to advise her clients thanks to her many travels as an elite athlete. Another member of this group had a garage and said that a lot of his customers were connected to sport.

All 11 people in this group expressed job satisfaction and just 36.4% said they would like to change something about their jobs.

Like the parallel life strategists, and unlike the lifetime athletes and non-strategists, a high proportion of freelance strategists had a university (63%) or secondary education (36%). These strategists also largely stated that their parents had had a positive influence on their education (81.1%). The proportion of respondents who said that they had received support from other agents in the sports sector (45.5%) was much higher than in the other three categories.

The above observations are consistent with the fact that, after the parallel life strategists, the freelance strategists had the strongest awareness of their future (63.3%). In other words, they knew that their athletic career was going to end and that they needed to prepare for the future. Some of the respondents had always been aware of the future (36.4%), others had only started to think about this towards the end of their sport careers (36.4%), and others claimed that they had never thought about their life in sport ending (27.3%). Over half of the group (54.4%) took specific actions to prepare for the future.

Ninety percent of the respondents in this category had been involved in professionalized sports that allowed them to save. Their income had come from scholarships, club fees, sponsorship or a combination of these. In 45% of cases, these savings had enabled the athletes to start their own business.

Just over a third of respondents (36.4%) had done voluntary work to gain job experience, while 18.2% had taken part in job placement programs organized by sports institutions.

Finally, just 9.1% of the members of this group stated that they had retired from sport for external reasons. Of the four groups, this is the group with the highest proportion of individuals who terminated their sports careers voluntarily, planned their retirement in advance and reported no adaptation problems. Despite this, 36.4% of those surveyed said that they missed sport.

Lifetime athletes

All 14 participants in this group were middle managers or members of training staff employed mostly in the sports sector (78.5%). Of these, 57.1% were over 40 years old at the time of the survey and 43.9% were under 40.

Lifetime athletes is the category with the lowest level of job satisfaction and the strongest desire to change aspects of work (71.4% in both cases). The main reasons given were to have more job security, work fewer hours and earn more. Furthermore, some of the respondents did not see themselves working as training staff members all their lives.

None of the participants in this group had a university education; 78.6% had a secondary education and 21.4% had a primary education. Of the four groups, the lifetime athletes group had the lowest level of positive family influence. A total of 42.8% of respondents said they had not been encouraged to study by their families, although 21.1% did mention that they had received positive encouragement from sports agents.

Awareness of the future was also lower in this group than in the other groups, with just 57.1% of former athletes stating that they had thought about their future

career and done something about it. Furthermore, this awareness appeared towards the end of their career or even after it (42.9% in both cases). Just 14.3% of respondents admitted to being aware that their career as an athlete had an expiration date and that they needed to do something to prepare for the future. This overall lack of awareness probably explains why the members of this group stayed in their careers the longest and only retired when their bodies could no longer handle the exertion. However, they stayed in the world of sport not because they chose to, but because they felt disorientated, confused and unprepared for their new life.

In all, it would appear that the athletes in this group did little to prepare for the future, although 50% did say that they had saved enough money to make a down payment on a home, and in some cases, to buy it outright.

Consistent with the fact that these athletes had not voluntarily planned their retirement from sport and lacked an identity beyond sport, 78.6% stated that they missed their sporting lives and 35% said that they had needed over two years to adjust to their new lives.

Non-strategists: it's a job

The fourth category, non-strategists: it's a job, comprised 21 former athletes who worked in offices, the services sector or as skilled laborers. Only 14.3% of the group worked in a job related to sport (the smallest proportion of all the groups) and 52.4% were aged between 35 and 39 years at the time of the survey. Two-thirds had a secondary-level education and the others all had a primary education, with 57.1% stating that their families had encouraged them to study during their athletic careers, but none mentioned support from sports agents.

Although 85.7% said that they were satisfied with their jobs, 66.7% also said there were aspects they would like to change (greater job satisfaction, fewer hours, free weekends or greater job security).

Interestingly, although 57.1% of the athletes in this category stated that they had been aware of their future during their time as an athlete, it was the group with the lowest proportion of people who had taken specific actions to prepare for a life beyond sport. The fact that just 33.3% of the respondents had participated in professionalized sports may partly explain this. The most common action taken to prepare for the future was to save (38.1% of cases). The money saved had been used to buy a house or make a down payment on one.

They largely did not plan to retire from sport, but just 33.3% (the same proportion as in the parallel life category) retired for reasons not of their making. Just 14.3% of the non-strategists said that they missed their life in sport at the time of the survey. There were even some respondents who did not want to hear or talk about this life and who expressed feelings

of rejection. It took 42.9% of the group two or three months to adjust to their new lives and 14.6% needed almost two years.

Typologies and social reproduction

In this section we analyze our results from the perspective of social reproduction theory and show how cultural and economic capital within the family affected the strategies used by athletes to prepare for a second career and the positions they attained.

Various models exist for examining the impact of a family's cultural and economic capital on children's education and careers. As stated by Marks (2008:294), each of these models has its advantages and disadvantages. We chose the dominance, or power, model, which assumes that the adult with the highest status (mother or father) determines the family's socioeconomic position (Erikson 1984).

Table IV shows the main occupation of the former athletes' fathers or mothers for each of the four job market entry groups. In the case of group 1 (parallel life strategists), which was composed of directors and professionals (43%) and technicians and middle managers (56%), the majority of parents were small business owners or middle managers (31.3% in both cases). In group 2 (freelance strategists), 36.4% of parents had their own business, while an additional 36.4% worked in an office or in the services sector. By contrast, in group 3 (lifetime athletes) and 4 (non-strategists: it's a job), few parents had their own business or worked in offices or the services sector. The majority were skilled or unskilled laborers.

A similar situation was observed for level of education (Table V). University-educated athletes and parents were most common in categories 1 and 2, whereas in the other two categories the majority of athletes had secondary-level education and the majority of parents had a primary education or no education at all.

These observations regarding parental education and profession support the theory that families with a higher cultural and economic capital will take greater steps to ensure that their children are aware of the importance of preparing for a second career. This influence is clearly depicted in Table VI, which shows that parental influence is greatest in categories 1 and 2, which are the categories with the highest levels of cultural and economic capital.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We cannot compare our findings with previous research due to a lack of empirical studies on job market entry typologies among elite athletes. We can, however, analyze our observations in the light of research on strategy, profile characterization and social reproduction mechanisms in this population.

Table IV. *Father or mother's education according to job market entry category*

	Directors and professionals	Small business owners	Technicians and middle managers	Office/services sector workers	Skilled and unskilled laborers	Agricultural workers	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
P1*. (Directors and professionals 43% and technicians and middle managers 56%)	4.2	31.3	31.3	10.4	16.7	6.3	100
P2*. (Small business owners 100%)	9.1	36.4	9.1	36.4	9.1	0.0	100
P3*. (Trainers and middle managers 100%)	0.0	14.3	28.6	7.1	42.9	7.1	100
P4*. (Office/services sector workers, 66% and skilled laborers 33%)	4.8	9.5	14.3	23.8	47.6	0.0	100

*P1. Parallel life strategists

*P2. Freelance strategists

*P3. Lifetime athletes

*P4. Non-strategists: it's a job

Table V. *Educational level of father or mother according to job market entry category*

	No studies	Primary education	Secondary education	University education	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
P1*. (University 87% and secondary 12%)	10.4	31.3	16.7	41.7	100
P2*. (University 63% and secondary 36%)	0.0	63.6	18.2	18.2	100
P3*. (Secondary 78% and primary 21%)	21.4	57.1	14.3	7.1	100
P4*. (Secondary 66% and primary 33%)	23.8	52.4	14.3	9.5	100

*P1. Parallel life strategists

*P2. Freelance strategists

*P3. Lifetime athletes

*P4. Non-strategists: it's a job

Table VI. *Positive parental influence according to job market entry group*

	Positive parental influence		Total
	No	Yes	
	%	%	%
P1. Parallel life strategists	33.3	66.7	100
P2. Freelance strategists	18.2	81.8	100
P3. Lifetime athletes	57.1	42.9	100
P4. Non-strategists: it's a job	42.9	57.1	100

The concept of strategy is widely used in the field of sociology to analyze social, organizational and behavioral aspects. Its best-known application is related to the development of strategic plans in businesses and other organizations. A company that operates without strategies and goals is currently inconceivable. Strategic plans generally cover a predefined period of time and are reviewed regularly to monitor progress. Sports organizations are no exception. However, the concept of strategy also arises in other areas of sports sociology, and one particularly interesting area is the study of emotional strategies. Emotions are internal feelings and their communication therefore depends on verbal and body language (Heinemann 1999). Athletes frequently conceal or stage emotions in order to trick their opponent and gain advantage (Hackfort and Schlattmann 1991). This staging of emotions is carefully timed (Gallmeier 1987; Snyder 1990) and is also used to maintain group coherence at times of maximum tension (Puig and Vilanova 2011) or to maintain a sense of harmony within the organization (Heinemann 1999). In the case of elite sports, Stambulova et al. (2009) suggested that athletes who plan well in advance for a life after sport are much better equipped to cope with the transition and to build a second career. Although these authors do not explicitly use the term *strategy*, the concept is implied and their results coincide with ours. Guiot and Ohl (2016), however, did analyze the strategies used by triathletes to reconstruct their post-athletic career identity.

Our results also shed light on how different strategies and factors of influence might affect career outcomes following transition from a career as an athlete.

As recommended by Stambulova et al. (2009), athletes should prepare for their retirement. Our results show that athletes who made advance career plans (60% of those surveyed) ended up working in senior or middle management positions. By contrast, those who did not take specific steps to prepare for the future ended up working as members of training staff, office workers or skilled laborers, or found employment in the services sector.

Our findings are consistent with those of Shachar et al. (2004), who observed that athletes who were unprepared for the future, like the lifetime athletes in our series, tended to end up working as trainers, coaching assistants or activity leaders. The authors suggested that by not preparing for the future, athletes avoid the negative consequences of a career transition to an unfamiliar field and save themselves the stress of making a move for which they are ill-prepared. Our results, however, show that this is not always the case, as the members of our non-strategists: it's a job group largely did not plan for the future but found employment outside sport; a field with which they no longer wished to have anything to do.

Consistent with the convergent and parallel career models proposed by Pallarès et al. (2011), our results support the theory that athletes who are aware of the future are better able to cope with the transition to a second career (Torregrosa et al. 2004). This was evident in our parallel life and freelance strategist groups. As pointed out by Coffee and Lavalée (2014), skills have a direct impact on the employability of individuals.

Our findings coincide with those of numerous studies reporting that forced retirement is associated with greater career transition difficulties (Guiot and Ohl 2016; Alfermann, Stambulova and Zemaityte 2004; Shachar et al. 2004; Blinde and Stratta 1992; Werthner and Orlick 1986). Our results also show that athletes who terminate their career due to unforeseen, external circumstances feel more nostalgic and have greater adaptation difficulties. This was particularly patent in the lifetime athletes group.

Our findings also suggest that athletes with an identity outside sport feel more satisfied with their second careers, probably because their career move was guided by free choice (Shachar et al. 2004). This was the case with the parallel life and freelance strategists in our group.

Our results show how rational choice theory can be used to explore whether athletes have particular job preferences, expectations and goals, and if they act accordingly, and also to investigate whether or not they have a strategy for the future, and if they do, to see what actions they take throughout their sport careers to prepare for entry into a new job market. Rational choice theory was thus useful for examining strategies implemented (or not) by athletes to prepare for a second career and to use these findings to build a typology of job market entry categories or profiles.

Finally, our analysis of career transition strategies among elite athletes shows how class relations are perpetuated by social reproduction mechanisms, and also helps to see how a family's cultural and economic capital influences athletes' strategies for preparing for a life outside sport. This phenomenon has been demonstrated by multiple studies in the fields of sociology and sports sociology.

In brief, our findings support previous reports that career transition coping processes depend not only on the reasons for the transition, but also on each athlete's individual and social resources and skills (Stambulova et al. 2009; Coffee and Lavalée 2014). They show how the concept of strategy helps to understand why certain athletes build resources (e.g., education, job experience) throughout their sports careers that enable them to have a satisfactory second career and why others do not (Vilanova and Puig 2014). They also show, within the sphere of social reproduction, that some athletes have social support

while others do not. Our analysis yielded four job market entry profiles that differed according to preparation for the future, influences from the athletes' immediate environment and careers pursued following termination of their athletic career.

Knowing that athletes have different ways of preparing for a future career outside sport will help to improve the effectiveness of career transition programs, as the content of such programs can be better adapted to individual needs depending on the athlete's profile.

Programs for parallel life strategies, for instance, could provide information on university courses to help athletes combine their studies with their lives as professional athletes. An important objective of these programs should also be to foster contact between the different social agents involved in an athlete's life (e.g., between the athlete's coach and his or her tutor to help ensure a productive balance between study and sport). Programs for freelance strategists, by contrast, should equip athletes with entrepreneur skills and teach them how to invest their earnings or choose a financial advisor wisely. In the case of lifetime athletes, support programs should build athletes' awareness that their sport career will come to an end, help them to define goals, create an identity outside sport and plan for their retirement, as well as work with families to increase their awareness of the importance of exerting a positive influence. Finally, non-strategists (it's a job) should be made aware that their career in sport will end one day and that they will need an alternative career. All such programs should seek to involve athletes who are already role models and also target and actively involve all the agents involved in the athletes' lives.

The present study has a number of limitations, including a risk of recall bias due to its retrospective

design. To reduce this risk, future studies should employ a prospective longitudinal design, with follow-up of athletes throughout their careers and interviews with their families. Timelines and similar tools could also be used to stimulate recall. A second limitation is that our findings cannot be generalized beyond the study population, which comprised a relatively small sample of former Olympic athletes living and working in Catalonia. This limited sample size also precluded performing the necessary statistical analyses to test the internal validity of our results. Finally, future studies should investigate the experiences of less successful athletes who train just as hard as the participants in our survey.

Our results offer preliminary insights into social reproduction mechanisms underlying career transition processes among Olympic athletes. Their interpretation, however, is somewhat reductionist and further research is needed. To better understand the practices of the social agents involved, it is necessary to investigate their available capital and to explore the statistical associations, between original, current and potential social positions. These positions are not static, as social agents implement strategies to conserve or increase their capital (Brunet and Morell 1998).

To conclude, this study extends on the research into job market entry strategies employed by Olympic athletes and provides a better understanding of different ways of preparing for a more satisfactory second career and life following retirement from sport.

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