



# The Vastness of Mental Health Inquiry Within Elite Sport Contexts

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# Background

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- Former major games athlete qualified for the 1992 Olympics.
- Have worked with Olympic Teams and professional sport since 1995, including national team shooting, figure skating, badminton, boxing, UFC, equestrian, karate, and kick boxing.
- Two-Term Canada Research Chair 2011-2020.
- Two-Term President of International Society of Sport Psychology 2017-2025.
- Past President Association for Applied Sport Psychology 2014-2015.

EDITED BY  
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With Assistant Editor  
Alessandro Quartiroli



# MENTAL HEALTH IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Selected Writings from the  
ISSP Academy of Science

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON KEY ISSUES IN SPORT AND  
EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGY

## Ingredients

- Elite athlete mental health - ISSP Position Stands
- Elite athlete identity and mental health
- Transitions, adaptations, and elite athlete mental health
- Career demands and elite athlete mental health
- Occupational health and safety and mental health



### International society of sport psychology position stand: elite athlete mental health revisited

Robert J. Schinke, Kristoffer Henriksen, Zella E. Moore, Natalia Stambulova, Jessica Bartley, Suzanne Cosh, Christopher R. D. Wagstaff, Alessandro Quartaroli, Paul Wyleman, Charles A. Maher, Liwei Zhang, Gangyan Si, Goran Kentta, Chun-Qing Zhang, Yufeng Li, Andreas Kuettel, Regina Brandas & Rebecca Wong

To cite this article: Robert J. Schinke, Kristoffer Henriksen, Zella E. Moore, Natalia Stambulova, Jessica Bartley, Suzanne Cosh, Christopher R. D. Wagstaff, Alessandro Quartaroli, Paul Wyleman, Charles A. Maher, Liwei Zhang, Gangyan Si, Goran Kentta, Chun-Qing Zhang, Yufeng Li, Andreas Kuettel, Regina Brandas & Rebecca Wong (11 Jun 2024): International society of sport psychology position stand: elite athlete mental health revisited, *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, DOI: 10.1080/15215979.2024.2359872

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15215979.2024.2359872>

Published online: 11 Jun 2024

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# Elite athlete mental health is multifaceted, the most popular elements being personal

- Within elite sport, physical challenges including intense training, sport injury, rehabilitative commitment, concussive injuries, physical burnout, eating patterns, and sleep hygiene can have psychological consequences, including cognitive, emotional, physiological, and behavioural sequelae (Fan et al., 2023). Likewise, psychological challenges such as relational problems, maladaptive personality traits, emotion regulation deficits, traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, aggression, disordered eating, and substance misuse can culminate in significant short- and long-term physical consequences (Henriksen,



### Cultural sport psychology as a pathway to advances in identity and settlement research to practice

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#### ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**  
Cultural sport psychology  
Sense  
Historical perspectives

#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To situate mostly European cultural sport psychology scholarship in a historical backdrop and then to draw on two recent examples from such scholarship to propose future prospects.  
**Design:** A review of literature is utilized to situate the recent prominence of cultural sport psychology. This review is written temporally from past, to present, to future prospects.  
**Method:** A presentation of scholarship is presented temporally relating to the following: (a) gender scholarship, (b) cross-cultural work in race and ethnicity, (c) siting of cultural sport psychology in present day, with the emergence of European scholars, (d) the topics of intersectionality of identity and acculturation are drawn upon to reveal diverse approaches taken in this line of scholarship and practice, and (e) reflections and recommendations are proposed, calling for openness of perspectives and topic areas.  
**Results:** The presentation of scholarship is intended to serve as a form of advocacy for diverse approaches in cultural sport psychology. This advocacy is exemplified through such terms as cultural praxis and decolonization, beyond a broader call for receptiveness for diverse epistemological approaches.  
**Conclusions:** Cultural sport psychology is now becoming popular, among both scholars and practitioners. The benefits from such approaches extend beyond advocacy through research to mental health benefits for sport participants and exercisers.

The European Federation of Sport Psychology is presently celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our authors are honored to be part of this *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* commemorative special issue. We have written this paper on cultural sport psychology, or CSP (Schinke & Harabian, 2009), having published this genre of scholarship within PERSAC's journal for some time. Advocating for diversity of identity in (and through) sport psychology enriches our academic community, and we believe, pushes our domain to consider norms, values, modes of expression, research practices, and methods of intervention with closer attention (Schinke & Moore, 2011), whilst considering where and when these do and do not belong and why it is thus (Cole, 2010; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012). Those who engage in CSP are concerned with exploring the unique cultural standpoints of sport participants and those who work with them in the field of sport via their various professional roles (e.g., mental training consultants, coaches, researchers, further sport science provisions, teammates). Furthermore, CSP scholars and practitioners

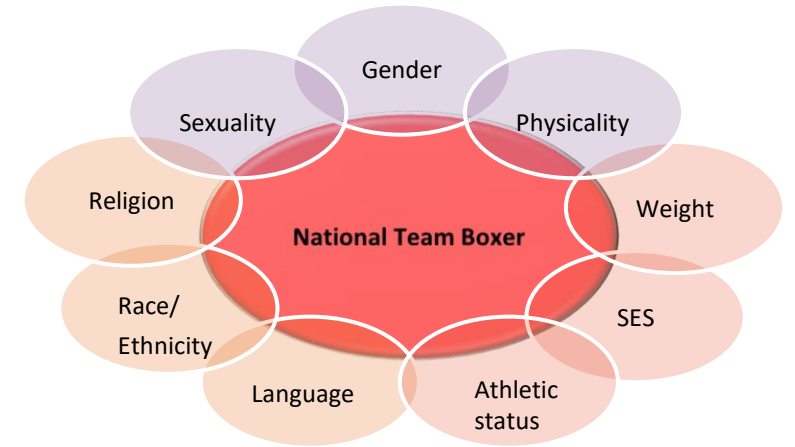
consider the impact of their own cultural practices and norms on people they engage with in dialog and how these contribute to the marginalization and centralization of people, including themselves and those they engage with (Schinke & McGannon, 2016). Now widely-accepted among scholars as a burgeoning form of advocacy, CSP has not yet parlayed consistently nor systematically into applied practice contexts, despite its evidence in progressive professional sport teams (e.g., Iattochio et al., 2013). The omission of CSP, which can be found in many university institutions and national societies, has mostly continued despite the potential opportunities for inclusiveness that sport psychology can afford. As C. L. Cole noted in 2010: "Sport and exercise psychology's commitment to applied work makes it a privileged site for situated research and intervention into normalization practices and processes" (p. 399). A disconnect from the conceptual to the practical is understandable given that traction in scholarship, especially in a complex, multilayered and rich topic such as cultural diversity, tends to become visible in writing long before it is normalized within a domain

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.09.004>  
Received 4 May 2018; Received in revised form 9 August 2018; Accepted 8 September 2018  
Available online 21 September 2018  
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## PSE Invited Paper 2018

# EACH PERSON BRINGS THEIR/HER/HIS IDENTITY HOLISTICALLY TO MENTAL HEALTH



# AMH status is equally contextual

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- What may look like mentally unsound behaviours may reflect a reasonable reaction to abnormal circumstances. At the same time, mental health and how it is fostered will vary depending on context. Contexts include the individual (e.g., race, gender, religion, ethnicity), environment (e.g., national support, organisational support, sport specific support), and developmental factors (e.g., age, career phases and transitions). These aspects influence motives and self-reflections. Understanding the complexity of identity in context - in relation to training environments and sport



# Transitions and Adaptation Success are Understandable through models

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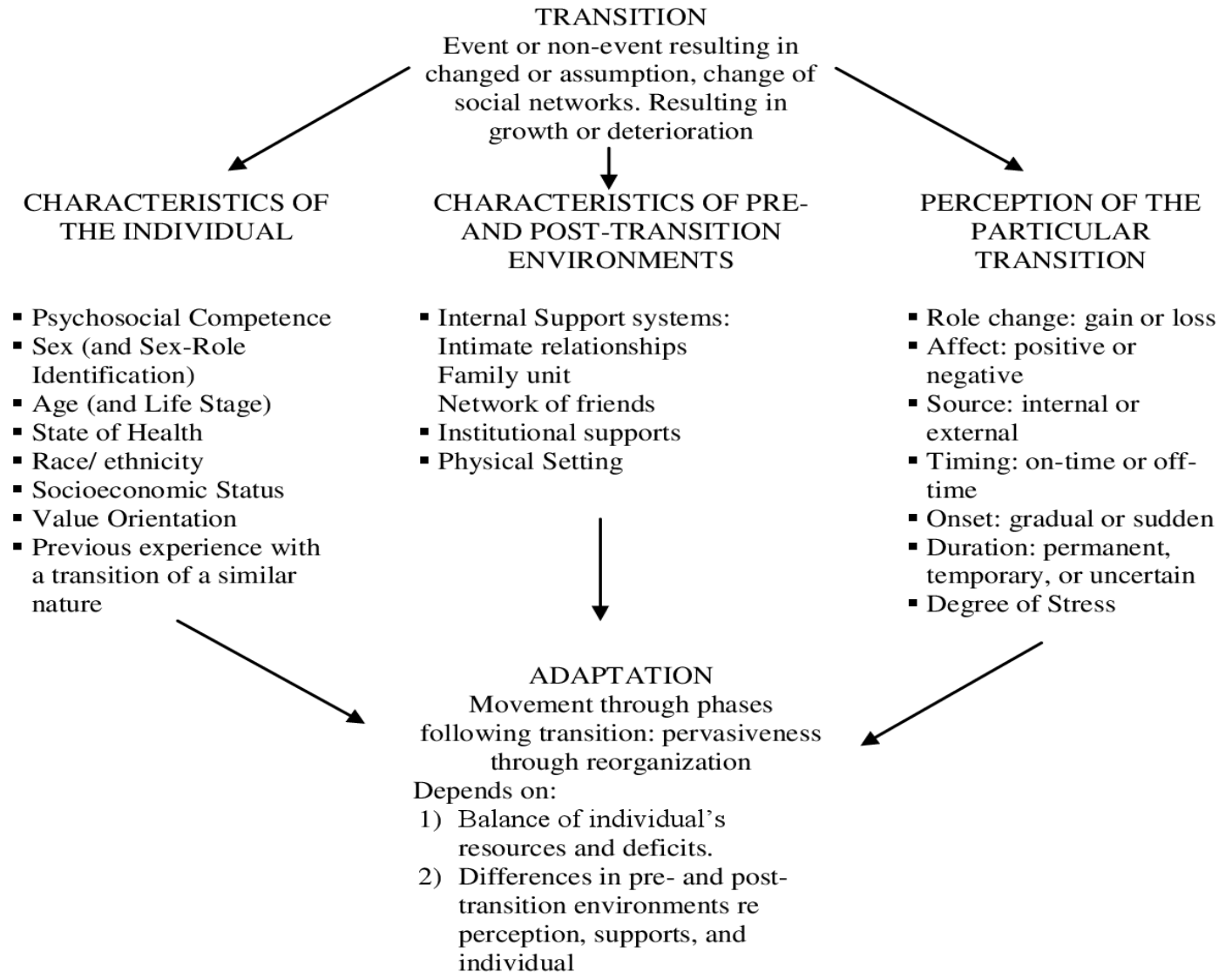


Figure 1. Schlossberg's (1981) model for analyzing human adaptation to transition

# Transitions include life domains and predictability

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- Career transitions are currently classified based on two criteria: a life domain, where the transition is initiated, and transition predictability. The life domain consists of athletic (e.g., the junior-to-senior), non-athletic (e.g., education or family-related), and dual career transitions (i.e., simultaneous transition in sport and education or work: Stambulova &







# Transitions and adaptations vary, so each progression must be monitored

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- Transitional persons examine demands and barriers (typically as challenges) in relation to their resources and select coping strategies based on using their strong points and compensating for their weaker points. The use of coping strategies leads to two transition outcomes: a *successful transition* or a *crisis-transition*.
- A successful transition is the outcome of effective coping, with a good match between your transition demands and your resources (*the most favorable transition pathway*). A crisis-transition is the outcome of ineffective coping caused by excessive

# Relocation is quasi-normative, but never easy

- Predictable transition for many aspiring athletes
- Part of a broader transition process
- Can be prepared for given the proper foresight
- Physical distance from existing support system
- Challenge of establishing new social ties
- New training expectations
- Limited access to familiar diet
- New accommodations

The Sport Psychologist, 2010, 24, 542-557  
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## Adaptation in Action: The Transition From Research to Intervention

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**Randy C. Battochio**  
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Adaptation is defined here as the end point in a process, when people respond in a positive manner to hardship, threat, and challenge, including monumental sport tests, such as international tournaments. Recently, there have been formal research investigations where adaptation has been considered as a provisional framework, with a more formal structure of pathways. Sport scholars have studied Olympic and professional athletes, provided support for a theoretical framework, and identified provisional substrategies for each pathway. In this article the authors situate adaptation within a larger discourse of related interventions, including coping and self-regulation. Subsequently, adaptation is proposed as a comprehensive intervention strategy for elite athletes during monumental sport environments.

There has been a growing interest in athletes' adaptation processes among sport psychologists (see Thompson & Sonn, 2009). The reason for such interest is that athletes and those who work with them need to build tangible skills that can manifest in effective functioning in highly complex, dynamic sport environments, especially during monumental competitions. At the Olympics, the organizational stressors (see Hanton & Fletcher, 2005, Hanton, Fletcher & Coughlan, 2005) encountered within context include increased media requests, transportation logistics to and from the venue, a high level of security at the venue and also in the village, a larger than usual audience, and variable officiating given the selections of a wider pool

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**Table 1 Description of Adaptation Substrategies**

Adaptation Pathways	Substrategies	Description
Understanding	Self-awareness	The athlete identifies the strengths and weaknesses of her/his athletic abilities. Used as a motivational tool, the athlete sets personal goals to attain in competition, which are largely founded on the athlete's perceived strengths and weaknesses. For example, an athlete may aspire to achieve a personal best outcome.
	Team Structure	The athlete assumes a role within the team's structure. This role is founded on the athlete's strengths and weaknesses as identified by the coaching staff.
	Opponent	The athlete identifies the strengths and weaknesses of their opponent before formulating a plan to overcome the opposition.
Controlling	Environment	The athlete gains insight into the contextual challenges pertaining to their competitive context such as varying weather conditions, novel sporting, residential facilities, and/or media demands.
	Preparation	The athlete makes adjustments such as planning for multiple scenarios, while also paying attention to task relevant information while avoiding distractions such as increased attention from the media.
Self-enhancement	Assertiveness	The athlete attempts to gain control over the opponent, the environment and/or the self by employing a seemingly aggressive approach.
	Learning	The athlete gathers new information for the purpose of improving their mental, physical, tactical, and/or technical abilities.
Belonging	Effort	The athlete practices or trains with hopes of developing each of their athletic abilities.
	Team	Team support involves words or gestures of support that are exchanged among teammates.
	Family	Family members make personal sacrifices by spending time and financial resources on the athlete throughout their formative years. When athletes compete in the professional ranks, family members provide verbal support by constantly contacting the athlete or even being in attendance.
Trusting	Coaches and Staff	Described as the athlete's degree of confidence in staff decisions. Trusting relationships are ideal when the athlete and coaching staff (SPC within) have successfully worked together or when the staff has experience at higher competitive levels.
	Teammates	The athlete's degree of confidence in her/his teammates' ability to effectively perform their role on the team in competition and/or in relation to daily tasks such as meeting curfews.

# Transitions should be a shared process, and they necessitate mutual learning

## PSE Paper of the Year 2020



### Community sport and physical activity programs as sites of integration: A meta-synthesis of qualitative research conducted with forced migrants

Thierry R.F. Middleton<sup>1,\*</sup>, Brennan Petersen<sup>1</sup>, Robert J. Schinke<sup>2</sup>, San Fu Kao<sup>3</sup>, Cole Giffin<sup>1</sup>

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#### ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**  
 Refugee  
 Cultural safety  
 Integration  
 Acculturation  
 Physical activity

#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Sport involvement has been framed as a way of helping forced migrants (i.e., refugees and asylum seekers) integrate into their host communities. Our aims was to synthesize multi-disciplinary qualitative research and through a sport and exercise psychology lens develop novel interdisciplinary insights of how sport and physical activity may become an integrative conduit for forced migrants.  
**Design:** Working from a social constructivist/epistemological position, a meta-synthesis of multi-disciplinary qualitative research was conducted.  
**Methods:** A literature search of seven electronic databases resulted in 23 peer-reviewed journal articles published since 1990 that met the inclusion criteria and were included in the synthesis.  
**Results:** Our descriptive synthesis based on the preceding analysis of multi-disciplinary literature is presented through three themes: (a) the beneficial role of sport in the life stories of forced migrants, (b) barriers to sport and physical activity, and (c) sport as an integrative conduit.  
**Discussion and conclusion:** Our interpretive meta-synthesis provides insight into the need for a critical approach to understanding how host communities may go about developing safe sport and physical activity contexts that support the integration of forced migrants.

The number of forcibly displaced people worldwide reached 74.8 million people in 2018 (UNHCR, 2019). Those who are forced to seek sanctuary in another country (i.e., *asylum seekers*; CCR, 2010) must prove through an application process that their fear of persecution in relation to their "race, religion, nationality, and/or membership of a particular social group" is well-founded in order to receive the protection and assistance that comes with being recognized as a refugee (United Nations Refugee Agency, 1951, p. 10). The journey to safety taken by asylum seekers and refugees (referred to henceforth as *forced migrants*) is often filled with traumatic incidents that can result in an immeasurable impact on their mental health, including occurring bouts of major depression, developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and being an acute suicide risk (George, 2012; Ley et al., 2018, 2017; Steel et al., 2006). Consequently, forced migrants must also begin to acculturate to their host community. Acculturation is the open-ended process of continuous change individuals go through as they navigate cultural differences when in regular contact with individuals who are culturally dissimilar to themselves (Chirkov, 2009). At an individual level, the stress of navigating cultural divides can manifest in psychosomatic symptoms related to anxiety and depression (Berry, 2017). The concurrent impact of trauma and acculturation means forced migrants often struggle with their mental health in a more severe manner than immigrants (i.e., individuals who have chosen to migrate; George, 2012). Helping forced migrants integrate into their host communities (i.e., maintain and regain connections with their home culture while developing connections with their host culture) has been posited as providing them with the necessary support to regain and/or maintain their mental health (Helen et al., 2016).

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## The Adaptation to the Mainstream in Elite Sport: A Canadian Aboriginal Perspective

Robert J. Schinke, Ginette Michel, Alain P. Gauthier, Patricia Pickard, and Richard Danielson, Laurentian University

Duke Peltier, Chris Pheasant, Lawrence Enosse, and Mark Peltier  
 Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve

Cultural sport psychology (CSP) is a recent attempt by researchers to better understand respondents from marginalized cultures. CSP research provides useful suggestions of how to work effectively with unique populations for coaches and sport science practitioners. This paper addresses the struggles and adaptation strategies of 23 (16 male, 7 female) elite Aboriginal Canadian athletes. National and international level athletes elicited from seven sport disciplines and three Canadian provinces were interviewed with a semistructured protocol. Indications are that Aboriginal Canadian athletes engage in two higher order types of adaptation: (a) self-adaptation and (b) adapted environment. The study was developed, analyzed, and coauthored with an Aboriginal community appointed research team. Implications, such as the use of ongoing reflective practice, are proposed for aspiring CSP sport researchers and practitioners.

Nearly 20 years ago, Martens (1987) proposed that applied sport psychology be influenced by practical needs within the general domain. As of late, one response to this call has been the positive interest directed toward cultural sport psychology (CSP). CSP is a line of inquiry that encourages a deeper understanding of marginalized and minority sport populations, and it does so by considering the client's (and respondents') cultural heritage and struggles of assimilation, or adaptation, within a more meaningful reflective approach (i.e., Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003; Martens, Mobley, & Zizzi, 2000; Ryba, 2005). By adaptation, we refer to how people from a given culture "understand their surroundings and [within these learn to] function competently" (Flake, 2004, p. 25). As Flake recognized, "Humans are adapted to fit into face-to-face groups; groups are important to survival. People are not adapted to survive as isolated individuals" (p. 12). Sometimes, the attempts at human adapta-

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### Journal of Sports Sciences

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tjss20>

#### Acculturation in elite sport: a thematic analysis of immigrant athletes and coaches

Robert Joel Schinke<sup>a</sup>, Kerry R. McGannon<sup>a</sup>, Randy Cesar Battochio<sup>b</sup> & Greg D. Wells<sup>c</sup>  
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 Published online: 20 May 2013.

To cite this article: Robert Joel Schinke, Kerry R. McGannon, Randy Cesar Battochio & Greg D. Wells (2013) Acculturation in elite sport: a thematic analysis of immigrant athletes and coaches, Journal of Sports Sciences, 31:15, 1676-1686, DOI: 10.1080/02640414.2013.794949

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2013.794949>

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# Onboarding initiatives from one context to the next are necessary, and should be holistic



International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology



ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rijs20>

## Towards an ecology of athletes' career transitions: conceptualization and working models

Kristoffer Henriksen, Natalia Stambulova, Louise Kamuk Storm & Robert Schinke

To cite this article: Kristoffer Henriksen, Natalia Stambulova, Louise Kamuk Storm & Robert Schinke (2023): Towards an ecology of athletes' career transitions: conceptualization and working models, International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, DOI: 10.1080/1612197X.2023.2213105

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2023.2213105>

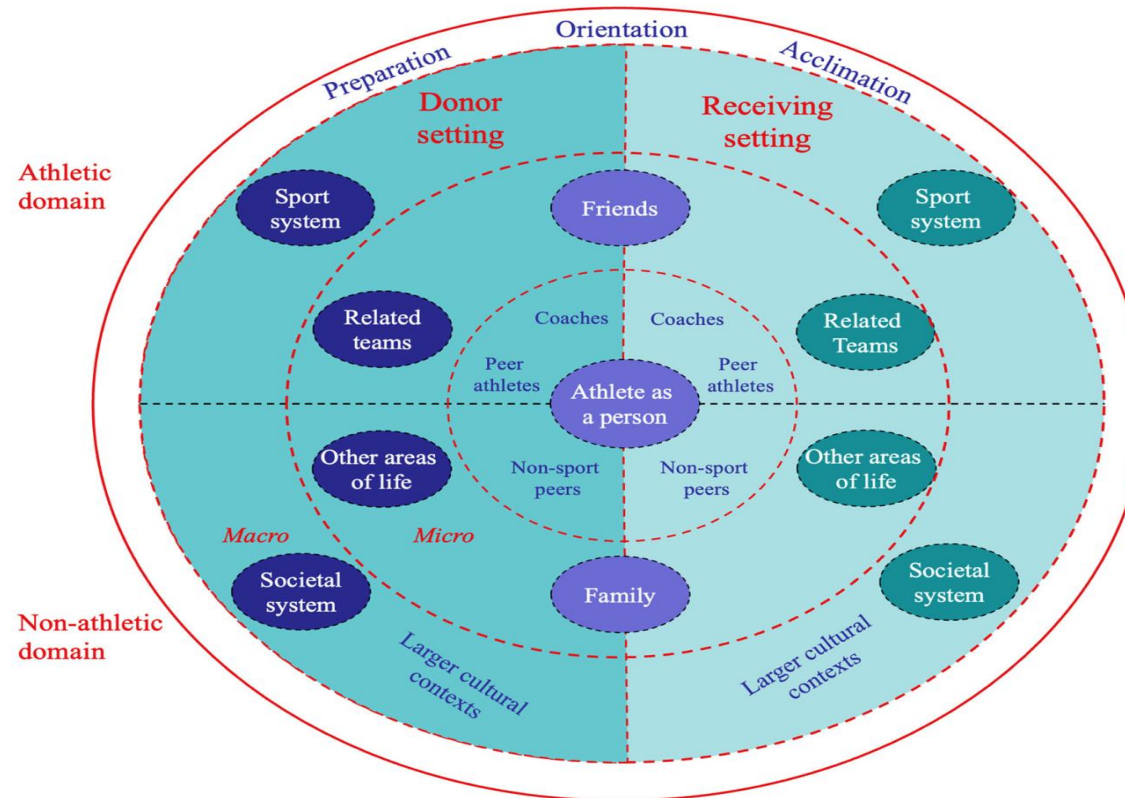


Figure 1. The transition environment (TE) working model.

Financial literacy  
Time management  
Nutritional literacy  
Cooking skills  
Team activities  
Visioning  
TBD

## Psychological injury rehabilitation lags behind physical rehabilitation: Elite athletes' experiences and support within Chinese context

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords

Elite athletes

China

Injury

Rehabilitation

Reflexive thematic analysis

### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was focused on two objectives: to explore (a) Chinese elite athletes' perceptions of their rehabilitation experiences after severe acute injuries, and (b) support strategies facilitating their return to competition. We interviewed 10 Chinese elite athletes through a semi-structured interview guide consisting of open questions and requests for information about the participants' injury and rehabilitation experiences. We utilized a reflexive thematic analysis to interpret participants' accounts. Two themes are presented to reveal the Chinese elite athletes' perceptions: (a) psychological injury rehabilitation lags behind physical rehabilitation and (b) post-injury psychological support within the CWNS. This study contributes to advance rehabilitation scholarship by providing a unique Eastern, collective perspective embedded with the Chinese Whole Nation System (CWNS).

Sports injuries, which are common for athletes of all ages and across all nationalities (Maffulli et al., 2010), can be classified into three types: acute, acute to chronic, and chronic (Zhu et al., 2014). Acute sports injuries are caused by sudden traumatic events accompanied by acute inflammatory symptoms such as swelling, heat and pain, necessitating immediate medical care and sport postponement (Derman et al., 2020). The incidence of acute injuries is higher than that of chronic injuries (Derman et al., 2020). Injury severity is measured as the number of days athletes are unable to participate in training and competition, and can be divided into slight (1–3 days), mild (4–7 days), moderate (8–28 days), and severe (>28 days) (Pulley et al., 2006). Different types (acute versus chronic) and severity (mild versus severe) of injuries cause various degrees of psychological impact on athletes (Wiese-Bjornstal, 2015). This project focused on the severe acute injuries of elite athletes in Chinese national teams.

Severe acute injury is a main reason why elite athletes cannot continue their training (Crema et al., 2018). There is consensus that elite athletes face unique challenges, pressures, and limitations (Schaal et al., 2011), such as sports performance demands, and external expectations from their public and media (Siskin & Fletcher, 2015). Many elite athletes will experience injuries in their sport careers, but not every athlete will recover to pre-injury level, at a 2-year follow-up that 74.9% of patients had returned to running and only 58.4% to their same

pre-injury sport (Sadogi et al., 2018). Supporting elite athletes' return to their sport following severe acute injuries is an important consideration for all support staff given the impact on athletes' physical, psychological health (Nikandorf et al., 2020). Recent reviews have revealed that diverse psychological, social, and contextual factors are present and influence all stages of recovery following a traumatic sport-related knee injury (Truong et al., 2020). A better understanding of these factors at the time of injury and throughout rehabilitation could assist with optimizing injury management, thus promoting rehabilitation and a healthy return to sport (Truong et al., 2020). However, discussions about the psychology of athletes' injuries mostly focus on either a specific type of injury, such as athletes with an anterior cruciate ligament injury (Birnswolf et al., 2015), their emotional responses to injury (Tracy, 2003), or their cognitive attitudes to injury, such as the role of acceptance and catastrophe in rehabilitation (Baranoff et al.). Furthermore, a paucity of studies investigated the role of sport culture on recovery from a traumatic sport-related injury (Truong et al., 2020). Understandings of sport injury have yet to integrate cultural contexts, such as a sport system, situated within national sport contexts. The consequence has been an accelerated understanding of severe acute injury, and an unclear path to effectively supporting athlete rehabilitation. This project was undertaken in the Chinese Whole Nation System (CWNS), where the value of sport is collectivistic (see Schinke et al., 2009) and reflective of a specific

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2023.102465>

Received 12 December 2022; Received in revised form 10 May 2023; Accepted 11 May 2023

Available online 17 June 2023

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## Migration and meaning: an exploration of elite refugee athletes' transitions into the Canadian sports system

Cole E. Giffin, Robert J. Schinke, Michel Larivière, Diana Coholic & Yufeng Li

To cite this article: Cole E. Giffin, Robert J. Schinke, Michel Larivière, Diana Coholic & Yufeng Li (2023), Migration and meaning: an exploration of elite refugee athletes' transitions into the Canadian sports system, International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, DOI: 10.1080/1612197X.2023.2219460

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2023.2219460>



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Published online: 20 Jun 2023.



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## Suicidal ideation among Chinese national team elite athletes

Jiejie Liu, Li-wei Zhang, Robert J. Schinke, Yang Ge, Cole E. Giffin & Hongying Fan

To cite this article: Jiejie Liu, Li-wei Zhang, Robert J. Schinke, Yang Ge, Cole E. Giffin & Hongying Fan (16 Jul 2024), Suicidal ideation among Chinese national team elite athletes, Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, DOI: 10.1080/10413200.2024.2377970

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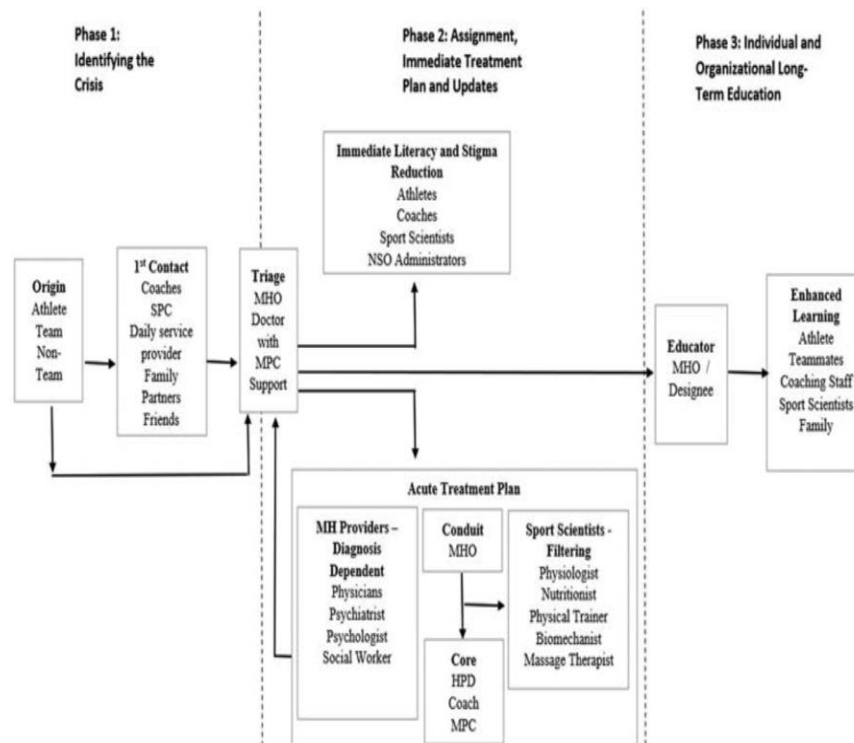


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# Athlete mental health status evolves in national systems - contexts

# It takes a NSO community to support recovery and de-stigmatization



**Figure 1.** Mental health services organisation plan. SPC = sport psychology consultant; MHO = mental health officer; MPC = mental performance consultant; HPD = high-performance director; NSO = national sport organisation.



## International society of sport psychology position stand: mental health through occupational health and safety in high performance sport

Robert J Schinke, Cole Giffin, Suzanne Cosh, Kiriina Douglas, Daniel Rhind, Christopher Harwood, Gangyan Si & Athanasios Papaioannou

To cite this article: Robert J. Schinke, Cole Giffin, Suzanne Cosh, Kiriina Douglas, Daniel Rhind, Christopher Harwood, Gangyan Si & Athanasios Papaioannou (2021): International society of sport psychology position stand: mental health through occupational health and safety in high performance sport, International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, DOI: [10.1080/1612197X.2021.1992857](https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2021.1992857)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2021.1992857>

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for the Cleveland Guardians

To unlock your potential, you must recognize and embrace your innate talents and abilities. *Gifted: 8 Steps to Succeeding in Sport, Work, and Life* will inspire you to believe in your natural gifts and achieve excellence across all aspects of your life.

Renowned sport psychologist Robert Schinke has helped hundreds of Olympic and professional athletes realize their unique gifts and talents. In *Gifted*, he shares eight lessons to guide you onto the life path you deserve:

1. Remember your natural gifts
2. Identify forces that pull you away from your gifts
3. Use your gifts to respond to change in your life and remain authentic
4. Appreciate recurring glimpses of your gifts and use them to reinvigorate your purpose
5. Use your gifts to endure life's challenges
6. Transcend average levels of achievement by using your gifts in crucial settings
7. Apply your gifts across multiple areas of your life
8. Encourage others to explore their own gifts

Alongside these lessons, you'll discover how successful athletes and professionals use their natural gifts to achieve their goals. Activities throughout the book will help you recognize your own strengths and limitations so you can cultivate your inner gifts to achieve amazing outcomes.



GIFTED

ROBERT J. SCHINKE

# GIFTED

## Closing Comments

SCHINKE

*8 Steps  
to Succeeding in  
Sport, Work, and Life*

