

# Track tales: A narrative exploration of within-career transition in sprint cycling

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## Abstract

**Background:** Although a considerable amount of literature is dedicated to the final transition of retirement, relatively little research focuses on within-career transition. Such a dearth of research may originate from the theoretical and methodological training that sport psychologists receive. The current study will focus on the diversity of the qualitative approaches on offer, in particular the benefits of utilising a constructivist ontological stance.

**Purpose:** The aim of the study is to investigate the within-career transition of two track sprint cyclists, and their coach, as they move from a competitive to an elite sphere

**Methodology:** A constructivist, narrative, approach was used to explore the transition. This approach uses the collective methodologies of ethnography, narrative analysis and autoethnography in order to triangulate and 'ground' the narratives in the context of the participant's lives.

**Results:** Three short stories are presented, along with an overview of the participant's athletic context and a reflective piece from the writer. The aim was to i) allow the 'voices' of the participants to be foregrounded to provide an idiographic account of within-career transitions ii) to examine how the 'situatedness' or contextual influences that surrounded the individual impacted on their transition and iii) examine if a narrative approach may act as a supportive mechanism to the participants during the transitional period, not just document its progression.

**Discussion:** The researchers own reflections are suggested, and centre around the nature of individual transitions, the perceived importance of age in sprinting, and also how the process involved in creating transitional stories can be therapeutic in orientation.

**Conclusions:** The aim of the study is to encourage the reader to reflect on the transitions faced in the three stories. Such reflection will hopefully generate debate and dialogue in relation to within-career transitions.

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