

Title: Mind the Gap - A Grounded Theory of Dual Career Pathways in Sport

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Aims: The purpose of this study is to identify and examine individuals' experiences of and the outcomes of sport and education or vocational development, with the intention to establish an overarching theory of dual career (DC) pathways in sport.

Method: The grounded theory method was selected to address the research aim. Seventeen DC athletes took part in a life-story interview; these were analysed, along with previous literature, to develop a conceptual understanding of the research area. The sampling approach led to the recruitment of both retired and current DC athletes and a large age range between the participants of 20 to 37 years. Participants competed at national and international level representing a variety of sports and different vocational backgrounds.

Results and Practical Implications: The findings that emerged from this study supported a categorization of DC experiences into 3 pathways: a sporting pathway (representing a sport-dominant approach to dual career), an educational/vocational pathway (representing an education/vocation dominant approach), and a DC pathway (representing a balance between sport and education/vocation). The overarching themes of these pathways were encompassed into 3 vignettes. These findings intricately link each pathway to differences in identity development. The DC pathway involves individuals simultaneously developing their

sporting and educational or vocational abilities and identities, resulting in reaching one's potential in both domains. Theoretically, this development could represent an equal progression in both domains; in reality, participants indicated that, on occasion, this progression fluctuated at different stages of development. The sporting and educational/vocational pathways both involve an acceleration in development in one domain (and a corresponding sacrifice in the other domain), which potentially results in realizing potential in one domain sooner while risking failure to realize potential in the other domain. Through gaining a deeper understanding of the different pathways, practitioners (e.g., lifestyle advisors and DC providers) can relate the framework to the DC individual they are working with and the DC pathway they are most closely following. Sport organizations could benefit from developing similar typologies of DC pathways that exist within their organization and ensure that the appropriate support is available for supporting and addressing the potential outcomes of pathways.

TASS have produced this lay summary. The full article is available (permissions may apply): <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10413200.2019.1654559>