Becoming Established in Applied Sport Psychology Practice – Reflections of established practitioners in Denmark

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Abstract

This qualitative study focused on how Danish practitioners made the transition into established professionals in the Danish field of applied sport psychology. This was done by: (1) examining demands, resources, barriers, coping strategies experienced during this transition into an established practitioner, and (2) to highlight the most important learning experiences made by the participants after having become established members of the Danish applied field of sport psychology. There were 6 participants in this study, 4 male- and 2 female. All considered established and accomplished within the Danish field of applied sport psychology. The level of experience ranged from 8-30 years of working with individual clients and teams. A semi-structured interview guide was created with help of the theoretical model by Stambulova (2003) i.e. the athletic carrier transition model. The interviews were coded using thematic content analysis and uncovered 256 raw data units which were categorized into five profiles; demands, barriers, resources, coping strategies and lessons learned during the transition. Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) theory of therapist development was used to determine what was required in order to consider an established professional. The results are discussed in relation to previous research and theoretical models. Lastly, the author has attempted to use the results to provide guidance and give advice to the new generation of novice practitioners in Danish field of applied sport psychology as well as Danish educational institutions.

Keywords: applied sport psychology, career transition, Danish practitioners.
Sammanfattning

Denna kvalitativa studie fokuserade kring hur danska praktiserande har lyckats etablera sig inom applicerad sportpsykologi i Danmark. Detta gjordes genom: (1) att undersöka krav, resurser, barriärer, copingstrategier inom övergången till en etablerad konsulent och (2) att uppvisa de viktigaste lärdomar deltagarna i studien gjorde sig genom deras etablering inom det praktiska fältet i dansk applicerad idrottspsykologi. I denna studien deltog 6 deltagare, 4 manliga och 2 kvinnliga. Alla betraktades som etablerade och succéfulla inom det danska fältet av dansk applicerad idrottspsykologi. Erfarenhetsnivån varierade från 8–30 års arbete med individuella klienter, grupper och lag. En semi-strukturerad intervjuguide gjordes med hjälp av den teoretiska modellen av (Stambulova, 2003) i.e. the athletic career transition model och användes för att samla in data i studien. Intervjuerna blev kodade och analyserade genom tematisk innehålls analys och 256 rådata utdrogs ur intervjuerna som i efterhand kategoriserades i en av sex profiler; krav, resurser, barriärer, copingstrategier eller lärdomar genom övergångs. Rønnestad and Skovholts (2003) teori om terapeuters utveckling användes för att värdera vad som behövdes för att kunna betraktas som etablerad professionell.

Resultaten diskuteras i relation till tidigare forskning och teoretiska modeller. Slutligen försöka författaren att använda resultaten genom att ge goda råd och stöd till den nästa generationen av idrottspsykologiska rådgivare och danska akademiska institutioner.

Keywords: applied sport psychology, career transition, Danish practitioners.
Becoming Established in Applied Sport Psychology Practice –
Reflections of established practitioners in Denmark

In Europe the past decades have witnessed a significant increase in the development of applied sport psychology (Wylleman, Harwood, Elbe, Reints, & de Caluwe, 2009) and the number of athletes, teams and coaches, who are open about the fact that they are working with a sport psychology consultant (SPC), are rising steadily. The increased interest has especially been noticeable in competitive sports, where more and more athletes, in the continuous effort to optimize performance, now have SPCs as part of their team (e.g. Simons & Anderson, 1995; Martin, Kellmann, Lavallee & Page, 2002; Martin, Lavallee & Kellmann, 2004; Tod, 2007).

More recently this tendency has also been witnessed in Denmark by the organization for elite sports (Team Denmark), which over the past decade has seen increasing demands by athletes and organizations requesting trained and competent SPCs. The SPCs at Team Denmark reported that they found it particularly interesting that these requests were no longer just coming from the elite- and professional athletes but also from amateurs and young club level athletes (Henriksen, Diment & Hansen, 2011).

Applied sport psychology (ASP) is an infinitely diverse area containing a multitude of facets (Silva, Conroy and Zizzi, 1999). The surge in interest in applied sport psychology, although positive for the field, has created some logistic problems. The reason being that there is no consensus of what makes a person qualified to practice and work in the field of applied sport psychology or what educational pathway provides the necessary skills (i.e. Henriksen et al., 2011; Hutter, Oldenhof-Veldman, Pijpers & Oudejans, 2016; Hutter, Van der Zande & Rosier, 2016).

The definition of what working as practitioners or consultants in applied sport psychology is not clear. Some use ASP methods and tools to provide guidance and support as
well as create strategies in order to optimize performance to achieve new levels of athletic accomplishments (Andersen et al., 1997; Roper, 2002; Weinberg & Gould, 2015). Some experienced SPCs have expressed, that an established practitioner should be able to provide emotional support through lifestyle change (McCann, 2005), vocational advancement, well-being and personal development (Wylleman et al., 2009). More SPCs are now hired to help athletes with career planning (Stambulova, 2010), career and crisis transition (Stambulova, 2003; Stambulova, 2017) and career termination (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). All valid skills clients could expect their SPCs to have in addition to the more obvious skills, such as goal setting strategies, visualization, motivation etc. (Papaioannou & Hackfort, 2014).

Through the experiences of established SPCs, FEPSAC (the European Federation of Sport Psychology) revealed even further subdisciplines that are likely to require the assistance of a SPC, such as providing emotional support for the families and coaches of the athletes, as well as to act as the mediating link between athletes, federations and sports clubs (Wylleman et al., 2009). Lastly, it is not uncommon that some SPCs seek clients from the non-athlete population and work in business coaching in order to make more money (Meyers, Coleman, Whelan & Mehlenbeck, 2001).

Another reason that makes the job of a SPC challenging and further aid to the lack in consensus, is that athletic performance is dependent on more than just learning to focus on the task at hand. The individual athlete's performance can be affected by not just individual change, but also by social- and societal change, which also makes the argument that a SPC needs to have the ability and foresight to work with a more holistic approach when dealing with athletes (Stelter, 2009).

The multitude of facets and definitions only increase the lack of consensus in the field and create a problematic issue of quality control. Without quality control, there is no way of guaranteeing the standards of services provided by the SPCs (Morris, Alfermann, Lintunen, &
Hall, 2003; Wylleman et al., 2009) and inconsistencies are seen in numerous personal philosophies, individual practical approaches caused by differing educational pathways taken by the SPCs (Martin et al., 2004).

Research, investigating athletes’ experiences from working with a SPC have shown that this lack of consensus has created problems for them. The reason being, that the athletes found it impossible to distinguish the competent SPCs from the unqualified ones. The athletes reported feelings of frustration and disappointment after working with an inexperienced or unqualified SPC (Orlick & Partington, 1987).

Organizations like the International Society of Sport Psychology make continuous efforts to upgrade and evolve the standards in the field (Martin, et al., 2002) but the title of sport psychology consultant or practitioner is not protected, as is the case for medical doctors or psychologists in the clinical field, making it impossible to prohibit unqualified consultants to practice.

In Denmark, efforts have been made by the elite organization Team Denmark to establish and secure the quality of services provided by their SPCs, at least to athletes receiving support by Team Denmark. This was done in 2008 by employing a permanent staff of consultants to work under a joint professional philosophy. These consultants have, since then, started working in collaboration with an external network of SPCs to accommodate the increased demands for consultants in Danish elite sports. These efforts also proved to be challenging due to the diversity of educational backgrounds, levels of experience and personal practices of the consultants in the network, especially the ones from the external network (Henriksen et al., 2011). Due to the difficulties Team Denmark experienced when guaranteeing the work provided by the collaborating SPCs, Henriksen et al. (2011) suggested, that further quality management is needed in the new generation of SPCs to avoid more athletes receiving inadequate services and negative experiences, thus further aiding the
previously stigmatized and tarnished reputation Danish applied sport psychology has suffered from in the past.

One way of creating consensus between practitioners is to have established educational program specializing in applied sport psychology, as is the case in countries such as the U.S., U.K, AUSTRALIA and Sweden. In Denmark, one of the major problems for the aspiring SPCs is, that they don't have these educational opportunities and are therefore left to their own devices when starting their careers.

A Swedish study, from the University of Halmstad (Stambulova & Johnson, 2010), investigating the learning experiences of novice SPCs revealed that professional supervision could be an effective way of helping neophyte SPCs develop confidence and facilitate a better start into the applied field of sport psychology. Similar findings have been made in the UK (Tod, 2007) and the U.S. (Watson, Clement, Blom & Grindley, 2009). Watson et al. (2009) further argued, that supervision could be a great help for neophyte SPCs when developing the practical skills and competencies that clients expect, as well as a step in the right direction for securing a higher quality in the provided services, an opinion that is also shared by experienced SPCs in Denmark (Henriksen et al., 2011). Supervision in an academic setting as seen in Sweden and the UK is not yet a possibility in Denmark and could, therefore, be viewed as a fatal flaw in the Danish educational system.

The option of personal supervision may not yet be applied in Denmark however, learning from the experience of established SPCs is still a possibility and could serve as a plausible way of bridging the gap between supervision and starting out alone. Wylleman et al. (2009) argued, that there was an urgent need for more data and knowledge about the development of SPCs across all career phases. Vocational career usually considers a person's development through occupational experiences (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989) referring to a hierarchical progression over time experienced by him/her within an organization or field,
but can also refer to a person's improvement within the same job through new skills even without change of title (Louis, 1980). Becoming established in the field of applied sport psychology could then be seen as a career transition, where the novice practitioner develops or transitions into a successful professional with enough clients to financially support his/her lifestyle as well as gaining enough experience to take on any challenge with confidence. The transition would determine the time period during which the SPC made significant changes to his or her role through the help of personal resources in order to overcome the demands in life (Louis, 1980), during the development of a vocational- or counseling career (Chudzikowski, 2012).

Information about which demands and obstacles established SPCs faced during their career transition into an established practitioner, as well as which important resources and coping strategies they used successfully could be of interest (Roper, Fisher & Wrisberg, 2005). Information such as this could prove helpful not just for students but even for the practitioners, who have already entered in the in-between stages, such as novice- and semi-experienced practitioners in the field of ASP.

Cropley, Miles, Hanton and Niven (2007) found that using reflective information as a way of investigating the careers of experienced SPCs could potentially be of great value to SPCs trying to navigate the waters when trying to establish themselves in the field of applied sport psychology.

One recent study by Felding (2018) investigated the early career transitions and educational pathways of Danish SPC using a using a theoretical framework focused on outlining demands, resources, barriers and coping strategies. This research gave an interesting insight into the early beginnings of the Danish SPCs as well as highlighting the hardship faced by the participant when trying to get an education in ASP (i.e. many of them had to travel to different countries to get their degree). A new study using the same theoretical
framework focused on outlining demands, resources, barriers and coping strategies in and learning experiences of Danish SPCs during their transition into established SPC, could potentially help SPCs in Denmark as well as other European countries. A study such as this could provide valuable information on what qualities are needed in order to become successful and established in the field of ASP.

**Theoretical Framework**

Stambulova and Johnson (2010) suggested using transition theoretical frameworks to investigate the transition of the novice SPCs from education to autonomous professional practice. In the effort to investigate the experiences of the Danish SPCs the Athletic career transition model (Stambulova, 2003) was chosen. This model was originally designed for an athletic career change but was chosen anyway as it considers any given transition as a process affected by several factors rather than a single event marking a clear change, making it suitable for this investigation. These factors present themselves in the form of demands, barriers, resources and coping strategies.

**The athletic career transition model (Stambulova, 2003).** During an athletic career transition, an athlete experiences specific demands and obstacles that he or she is required to cope with. Whether or not the athlete is able to find a successful coping strategy to overcome the demands, determines if he or she can successfully transition in their career or if the outcome will become a crisis transition.

In order to make a successful transition, the athlete must cope with the transitional demands and he or she must mobilize resources to help the coping process. The relationship between the onset barriers and demands and the mobilized resources will determine the outcome of the transition.

Stambulova determined that the athlete's resources are a combination of internal- such as skill level, talent or motivation, as well as external resources such as family support or
financial stability. The barriers an athlete faces could likewise be either internal, such as inexperience or external, such as coach relationship or bad facilities. The turning point in this model for whether or not the athlete could make a successful transition was, as before mentioned, the coping strategy.

As seen illustrated in figure 1, the athletic career transition model considers transitional demands as the first stage in the process, where the dynamics between the transitional resources and barriers will determine the coping. The second stage then illustrates the two possible outcomes depending on how successful the coping was i.e. successful ability to cope with the transitional demands will result in a successful transition or inability to cope with the transitional demands and result in a crisis transition.

![The Athletic Career Transition Model](image)

Figure 1 - The Athletic Career Transition Model (Stambulova, 2003).

**Therapists career development.** Through summarizing and reformulating the main findings of the data from 100 therapists and counselors from previous longitudinal and cross-
sectional studies, Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) theorized that therapists and counselors go through the following six developmental phases during their career.

**Phase 1 - The lay helper phase.** This phase is where the not-yet-trained therapist is motivated and driven by his or her empathy for-, and a feeling of responsibility to help others. The "Lay helper" is untrained and therefore he or she is mostly helping by means of emotional support and advice based on personal experiences and common sense. This personal drive is also what causes the choice in academic direction.

**Phase 2 - The beginning student phase.** This is the starting point in the aspiring therapist's education and training. During this phase, the beginning student still does not yet possess the adequate knowledge and skills to help potential clients on more than gut feelings and often experience feelings of vulnerability, anxiety and self-doubt when he or she realizes how complex and demanding their chosen field is.

**Phase 3 - The advanced student phase.** This is the transitional phase concerning graduation from the academic world and entering the professional field. Many therapists are already testing the waters in the applied field at this point and working with counseling and therapeutic clients. The therapists in this phase are still green due to their lack of experience, but now have the academic tools to reflect on their own performance and start providing better services by being less rigid and more spontaneous towards the clients.

**Phase 4 - The novice professional phase.** During the initial years after graduating the novice, the therapist is now on his/her own for the first time without the chance of supervision of a mentor or professor. He or she is, at this point, still learning the ropes and pitfalls when it comes to their relationship with the clients, such as frustration about the clients not progressing as hoped or by getting to personally invested in the clients. The limited amount of practical experience and preparation for meeting real clients during their schooling can also cause a lot of frustration during this phase of the career. However, after a while, the novice
professional will begin to discover their unique approaches, style and communication with clients and patients become more natural and relaxed. This is also the phase when the therapist gains much of his experience through trial and error and starts to develop their own ways of interpreting the academic guidelines and discover what works best for their ways of counseling. At the end of this phase, the therapist has begun his establishment in the practical field and seeks more and more challenges.

**Phase 5 - The experienced professional phase.** At this point in the therapist's career, he or she is no longer insecure but confident in his or her abilities, because of the many years of experience he/she has collected. Experienced therapists adopt a therapy role with an attitude congruent with their own values and interest. They seek to build a consistent way of approaching problems by constructing their own personalized system creating a more natural and fluent process. The experienced therapist now understands the value and necessity of the therapeutic relationship and its importance for the client's progress. In contrast to the novice professional, the experienced therapist no longer feels bound by the rules and constraints of frameworks and models but adapt them to suit his or her personal style of counseling. The experienced therapists have developed confidence in their professional judgement and realized that there is no correct way of doing things, but a correct process helped by the increased flexibility they have attained over the years. The experienced professionals have now learned to separate the role of therapist from their personal lives and have become better at creating personal boundaries in order to let go of their earlier (novice professional) feelings of responsibility to save the clients. At this phase, the therapists also have the competence to gain much professional knowledge of the interpersonal life with the clients as well as the personal lives and can use this to better understand human behavior. Many also gain insight from literature in philosophy and anthropology. The experienced professional will often start a new case based on experiences made from previous experiences with similar cases.
Phase 6 - The senior professional phase. This is the final stage of the therapist development, which takes place after approximately 20-25 years of working in the professional field. He or she has at this point gained extensive practical experience with high seniority among peers and coworkers. This seniority causes many novice- or even semi-experienced therapists to seek their guidance and tutelage, causing many senior professionals to become leaders and teachers within their areas of expertise. As this is the last developmental phase, the next predictable transition that will occur is retirement from practical work.

Defining the Established

For the purpose of this study, the author argues that in order to consider a SPC established they must have reached the experienced professional phase in Rønnestad and Skovholts model (2003). An established SPC must have several years of experience working in the field of ASP and created a name for themselves in the Danish field. The SPC must also manage to financially support their livelihood and families.

In order to investigate how a Danish SPC can become established in the field of ASP, the focus of this study will be the transition into the experienced phase and the experiences during the novice professional phase.

Previous Research

The amount of research on career transition for practitioners in applied sport psychology is limited. A recent study by Felding (2018) investigated the transition of Danish SPC from student to novice professionals. This study will serve as a reference point in the current investigation in order to distinguish the differences between novice professionals and the experienced and established professionals.

The information concerning this transition is, therefore, comprised through career narratives (Tod, 2007), personal philosophies (Taylor, 2008), lessons learned and interviews
on career development (Roper, 2008, McCarthy & Jones, 2014) by established and successful SPCs.

Practitioners who have made a successful transition from being a neophyte in the applied field and managed to establish themselves have listed several demands that they felt had to be fulfilled in order to a successful transition into an experienced and established professional. In the study, the findings from therapists and established SPC has been broken down into the categories previously mentioned in the theoretical model by Stambulova (2003) i.e. demands, resources, barriers and coping strategies. This was also done in order to compare the previous findings to the results of the current investigation as well as the previous study by Felding (2018).

Demands. When investigating what demands the Danish SPCs had to overcome in order to establish themselves in the Danish field of applied sport psychology. The consultants experienced several that were concurrent with the findings from novice professionals such as having a high passion for sports (Simons & Andersen, 1995; Andersen, Williams, Aldridge & Taylor, 1997; Taylor, 2008), perseverance, patience (Taylor, 2008, McCarthy & Jones, 2014) and drive for continued professional development (Wylleman et al., 2009) as well as a need for a strong motivation for succession and a willingness to work hard to reach career goals (Roper, 2008; McCarthy & Jones, 2014). These findings were also consistent with the finding from Danish SPC made by Felding (2018). The current study, therefore, focused on what was uniquely demanded of the novice professionals in order to make a successful transition into experienced professionals.

A clear demand for experience over time was found to be one a demand central for completing this transition (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Therefore, accumulating experience from a multitude of different sports and situations and learning from these experiences was key for the consultants in order to establish themselves as experienced SPCs (Roper, 2008;
McCarthy & Jones, 2014). Another demand that several therapists and consultants found was the need to develop their own philosophy (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) and consulting style (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). And this was only possible through the accumulation of experience from working with clients. Therapist and consultants found that developing a philosophy and therapy role congruent with their own values and interests increased the authenticity and trustworthiness of their work. The accumulated experience also allowed for another thing which was demanded, namely consistency in the way problems were approached (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; McCarthy & Jones, 2014).

The experienced professional must possess a profound understanding of the importance of the therapeutic relationship as this was seen as paramount for the progress of the clients and therefore also demanded (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Many SPCs have expressed that because the applied work with athletes can create unforeseen situations at any moment it was demanded that SPCs needs to develop readiness for the unexpected through learning to be flexible and adaptable. This goes for the SPC as a person as well as for his or her schedule because athletes could call at any time of the day during a crisis (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). The consultant may also need to travel with an athlete or team for several weeks at a time forcing them to spend time away from family and friends (Roper, 2005; McCarthy & Jones, 2014) creating another demand for flexibility.

Because of the time-consuming nature of working as an SPC, many consultants expressed that in order to keep a healthy family life while establishing themselves there was a demand to achieve a balance between work and family. Not only in by developing the ability to separate work and personal life but also to find a balance where important people weren't let down. This demand helped prevent therapists from burning out and suffering from depression (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; McCarthy and Jones, 2014).
In contrast to the novice professionals who were often concerned with gathering as much experience as possible from as many areas as possible and sometimes even taking non-paying jobs to get clients (McCarthy & Jones, 2014; Felding, 2018), a consistency in responses from established SPC (Taylor, 2008; McCarthy & Jones, 2014) as well as therapist (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) was that they felt that in order to establish yourself they needed to find a niche or an area of expertise in which to distinguish themselves and that in order to be respected as an experienced professional working for free was no longer an option. This created a demand for establishing payment rates for their services (Taylor, 2008; McCarthy & Jones, 2014)

Having a clear vision and motivation to reach this vision is also needed to keep pushing forward when uncertainty arises during slow progress and setbacks (Taylor, 2008)

McCarthy and Jones (2014) found that many SPC listed having a using the internet in the form of a homepage as a demand in order to establish themselves.

For the novice professionals, a secondary job in related fields was a demand because of the hardship of creating enough business to support a family (McCarthy & Jones, 2014; Felding, 2018). For the established consultants, this demand has been exchanged by the demand for full-time work in sport psychology. For many, this was a combination of work in the applied and the academic field (McCarthy & Jones, 2014).

**Resources.** In order to establish themselves, therapists and consultants needed to facilitate resources and develop specific qualities in order to cope with the transitional demands listed above. Some therapists and SPC’s have listed using life experience (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) and past sporting carrier (Taylor, 2008) as resources during their novice years. Life experience was also used as a supplement to the theoretical and academic knowledge to understand human behavior, and sports experience was used as a resource to better understand the athletes. Taylor (2008) reflected that having played competitive
badminton aided him in the ability to understand different scenarios for the clients. Being familiar with the specific lingo in a sport, which added to the client's trust in the SPC’s abilities. It also enabled him to better understand the tactics during a match.

Getting outside help from a supervisor or mentor during their early years was reported as a resource for the consultants who had the opportunity to do so and helped provide better services. This was seen both in consultants and therapists entering their novice professional phase (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Stambulova & Johnson, 2010) and in SPCs transitioning into experienced professionals (McEwan & Tod, 2015; Hutter et al., 2016).

Contrary to the advanced students, Felding (2018) discovered that novice SPCs listed confidence as a resource. This new-found confidence came from finally working and trying to make it in the applied field. Tod et al. (2009) reported similar findings and elaborated that the confidence aided creativity when using theoretical frameworks instead of trying to pigeonhole the clients.

Family support was reported as a resource across the entire career. Specifically, for the novice professionals, this was reported as emotional support when the therapists (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) or SPCs (McCarthy & Jones, 2014) experienced frustrations from struggling financially or failing to get clients.

Having Knowledge about Sexual orientation was also listed as a unique resource because it could give the consultant a better understanding of prejudice, discrimination, hate and inequality (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). Mark Andersen (in McCarthy & Jones, 2014) expressed that personal experience had led to increased confidence when working with marginalized athletes exposed to issues such as racism or sexism.

**Barriers.** When determining what obstacles were experienced while becoming established and how they affected the demands it became apparent that several of the barriers
consistent with this phase of the career development showed certain similarities with those from the earlier transitions i.e. into the novice-professional.

Feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt and frustration caused by the lack of experience and knowledge during the first years of the transition, were expressed by many (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; McCarthy & Jones, 2014; McEwan & Tod, 2015; Felding, 2018). Unique for this phase compared with earlier career phases was, because of the time the transition took for most of the consultants (most spent 6-10 years to gain enough experience to make the transition to an established professional) many have expressed barriers in the form of time away from loved ones (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Roper et al., 2005; McCarthy & Jones, 2014) creating feelings of loneliness. Roper (2002) also found that being a woman in a field that is mostly dominated by men was considered a barrier because many athletes expected the SPC to be a man. This barrier also created the grounds for another barrier in the form of lack of female role models and mentors in SPC (Roper, 2002).

When reaching a certain level, as a SPC, working with top-level teams and athletes became an opportunity. The amount of traveling that was demanded in order to follow the athletes around the world has been portrayed as a barrier when pursuing and maintaining a career because some SPC hated being on the road all the time (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). This was consistent with the findings of Roper et al. (2005) who also found that women practitioners who had families, experienced conflicting priorities when having to follow athletes on the road.

Having a strong reputation as an experienced and established consultant from the years of experience was for some experienced as a barrier. Even though a good reputation was good for business it also created stress for some because of the high expectations and pressure to deliver good results and medals from coaches, athletes and federations (McCarthy & Jones, 2014).
Coping strategies. In order to cope with the transitional demands, the novice consultants had to use different coping strategies. Hard work was key for this transition when SPCs were trying to establish themselves in the field but was also listed as a demand across the entire career. This, since it took true commitment for up to a decade before most participants in the previous research was able to consider themselves as truly established in the field of ASP (Taylor, 2008, McCarthy & Jones, 2014).

Trying to stay ahead and be prepared for anything and learning to make things up on the fly, was a strategy SPCs learned to use as a way of dealing with unexpected challenges as well as seeing setbacks as part of the development (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). Seeking help from a network of peers and colleagues for external input was also seen as an important way of dealing with tough challenges (Tod et al., 2007). Using a personal network was also a way to get clients for many while trying to establish themselves (McCarthy & Jones, 2014).

Using personal experience in specific sports or types of sports, was a way many consultants used to narrow their focus group and was reported as a way for them to develop skills and expertise faster instead of spreading the energy over numerous areas as well as focusing on lectures and workshops etc. (Taylor, 2008, McCarthy & Jones, 2014). Taylor (2008), argued that by approaching a less media covered sport, such as Karate that didn't already have the best consultants in the field competing for athletes (i.e. tennis or golf), was a way to circumvent the competition and provided a better chance for establishing a reputation as one of the experts in that area.

One SPC described, that his way of coping with his Luke Skywalker complex (i.e. his need of trying to save the clients from all their problems “the universe”) was changing his mindset from fixing the athlete to provide support and guidance while he or she worked through specific issues or skills.
Motive for the Study

Wylleman et al. (2009) suggested, that there was an urgent need for information about the developmental phases and transitions for practitioners in applied sport psychology. This information is needed across all career phases, but in particular for the experienced practitioner. During the investigation of previous research, no information was found based on the experienced of Danish SPCs. Data from a study, investigating SPCs transitions in a Danish setting, would not only increase awareness at a European level but, more specifically, act as an informative tool and guide for the students aspiring to pursue an education in applied sport psychology in Denmark. It might also serve as guidance for novice consultants, who are struggling to establish themselves in the field.

In 2010, Stambulova and Johnson suggested using career development tools and transition theoretical frameworks to investigate the transition of the novice SPCs from education to autonomous professional practice. This was done using Danish practitioners (Felding, 2018) making the incentive to further the investigation by including the transition into established practitioners in Danish ASP. Information about transitional demands as well as barriers, resources and coping strategies could prove valuable for students who are wondering what skills to develop in the field, but also to the novices that are already more than a few years into their professional careers.

As mentioned the Denmark SPC’s don’t have the option of supervision in an academic setting. For this reason, a study with these objectives, combined with a more reflective representation of important lessons learned, could be a great help to both students trying to plan their career path and inexperienced consultants already practicing in the field of ASP. The reflections of the already established in the field could possibly act as a form of mentoring or guidance for better and faster development (Tod, 2007).
**Purpose**

The study aim was to investigate the reflections and experiences of established SPCs in the Danish fields of ASP with the focus on the transition into an established and experienced practitioner. This was done by using the athletic career transition model to outline the transitional demands the participants faced during the transition, as well as what barriers and resources were present for them during this time and what coping strategies they used to make a successful transition. A further aim was to collect the most important learning experiences the Danish SPCs made both during this transition and throughout their career as a whole.

The study set out to achieve the study aims through the following objectives:

a) To investigate Danish SPCs' experiences in relation to their transition into established SPCs.

b) To explore the coping strategies during this transition and lessons learned by the established Danish SPCs.

**Method**

**Research Design**

As the aim of the study was to investigate the experiences and reflections of the Danish SPCs a qualitative approach was chosen. The methodology was based on Christensen, Nielsen and Schmidt's (2012) qualitative research interview that created their guidelines for students using post-positivist approaches. This approach was used with the aim of uncovering individual truths as well as identifying common themes, which could be used to generalize in order to give future advice. This method was chosen because of its replicable and simple nature (easy to follow) and because of its inclusion of content analysis. The study was undertaken using the following three steps. First, the athletic career transition model (Stambulova, 2003) together with a theory of therapist developmental (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) were used to identify criteria for participation and create an interview guide.
Secondly, participants (Danish SPCs) were interviewed about their career experiences and reflections regarding their career development and career transition. This was done to get retrospective data about the participants' careers. Lastly, the researcher used the empirical data to try to identify commonalities and uniqueness in the participants' reflections and experiences in an attempt to create guidelines and advise to future generations of Danish SPCs.

Participants

The participants consisted of six established Danish SPCs who are currently working or have worked in the applied field of sport psychology in Denmark (see Table 1). The sample consisted of four men and two women who had various educational pathways. At the time of the interviews, one participant held a Ph.D., one was a Ph.D. student, three held master's degrees and one was a college Professor. Participant 1-5 all took part in a previous investigation into career transitions of Danish SPC by the researcher (Felding, 2018).

The participants were identified using both convenience and purposive sampling (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). To assure that the sample possessed the adequate experience and to make sure that they had indeed made the transition from novice to experienced professionals, as described by Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003), a minimum of six years of applied work as an SPC was required. No upper limit was chosen because there is no clear time definition to ensure a successful transition into an established SPC. To further ensure that the Sample could be considered established all participants had to be (currently or in the past) part of the internal- or external network in Team Denmark. Finally, for convenience, all participants had to be accessible within the Copenhagen area to make face-to-face interviews possible.
Table 1

**Description of Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic level</th>
<th>Primary career</th>
<th>Years in ASP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Sport psychology consultant (Team Denmark)</td>
<td>10+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Sport psychology consultant (Private sector, former TD*)</td>
<td>10+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Sport psychology consultant (Private sector + External TD**)</td>
<td>8+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ph.D. student</td>
<td>Sport psychology consultant (Private sector + External TD)</td>
<td>10+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Sport psychology consultant (Team Denmark)</td>
<td>12+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Sport psychology consultant (Private sector)</td>
<td>30+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Previously part of the internal network at Team Denmark. **Part of Team Denmark’s external network*

The reason for primarily choosing consultants connected to Team Denmark (currently or previously) was first to ensure the level of experience of the participants. But also, because Team Denmark, as previously mentioned, is the only organization who has attempted to achieve an overarching consensus about how to practice in applied sport psychology (Henriksen et al., 2011). One of the participants who was previously a member of the internal network resided in Sweden but, was added even though this prevented the interview to be done face-to-face.

**Data Collection**

**Interviews.** Each interview was performed by the author and was conducted with the aid of a semi-structured interview guide consisting of open-ended questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interview guide (see Appendix A) was constructed with the aid of the theoretical model by Stambulova (2003) in order to make sure that the reflective stories provided the needed information for the study aims. Each interview ranged in duration from 60-80 minutes.
To give the participants a chance to give their informed consent, all six interviews started with a brief introduction explaining the focus of the study, as well as a presentation of the interviewer. During the introduction, ethical aspects and rules for the study were explained and the participants were guaranteed that their identity would be kept confidential as well as that all data would be stored according to the Swedish ethical research guidelines and used only for academic purposes (Vetenskabsrådet, 2011).

After the initial introduction, the interview participants were encouraged to tell the researcher a bit about their personal lives. The interviewer initiated this by opening with the following question “can you please tell me about yourself?” The participants were allowed to tell their stories in a conversational manner, unless the story strayed too far from the focus of the study, in which case the interviewer would ask more specific questions, such as “how did you get started in the field of applied sport psychology?” or “do you think you could construct a timeline for your career all the way from education to where you are at the present?”

If the stories didn't include or elaborate sufficient information about the amount of practical training they had undertaken or if they had had a mentor during the initial stages of their career, questions such as, “during your first years working in the field, were you able learn from more experienced consultants?”, would be asked to steer the interview back in the desired direction (Christensen Nielsen & Schmidt, 2007).

To ensure that enough data about the transitional phases were recorded, a number of specific questions, all though in a roundabout manner, were asked. These would concern perceived demands, recourses, barriers and coping strategies and went in the form of “did you experience any difficulties during your initial years of working in the applied field?” or “do you find that there is a difference between those difficulties and those you experienced later in your career?”. “What helped you through it?” or “What did you do yourself when faced with these challenges?”.
Lastly, the participants were encouraged to tell about the most important lessons they had learned through the different stages of their career, and what advice they would give to the next generation of aspiring sport psychology consultants.

When the participants expressed that they had no more information to give and the interviewer felt that all research questions had been answered, the interviews were concluded and farewells were said.

**Pilot Interview.** To make sure that the interview guide was able to generate sufficient data and in order to get a chance to make changes before the research project began, a pilot interview was undertaken (Christensen et al., 2007). The pilot interview was done with the voluntary assistance of a clinical nutritionist, who in her profession had been helping and consulting patients and clients over the last seven years. Even though this pilot participant didn't work in the same field as the participants of this study she was still considered as a suitable replacement as she had undergone many of the same transitional phases and experiences that was expected from the consultants working in applied sport psychology. She had also gone through many of the stages as seen in previous research with clinical therapists, such as starting her career and own business with no practical experience, while establishing herself in a competitive field and building a reputation and learning how to work with and consult clients. The pilot interview lasted 47 minutes and resulted in a few minor changes to the opening statements and questions to give the participants more freedom to tell their stories, such as “could you please tell me the story of how you came from a student to where you currently are in your career?”
**Procedure**

Each participant was contacted via e-mail with an information letter and an invitation to participate in the research project. The information letter (see Appendix B) explained the circumstances for their participation and assured them that they could terminate their participation in the study at any time. A guarantee of full anonymity was also given. All this to give the participants a chance to give informed consent to participate in the study (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011).

After each of the participants had consented to participate in the study, interviews were scheduled. For the participants' convenience, all interviews were arranged to take place at their individual workplaces. One interview was conducted via Skype, which under normal circumstances could have created a very informal and possibly stiff interview due to the lack of in-person contact (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). However, the author had a long-time relationship with this informant and this interview form was therefore deemed adequate for this participant. Every interview was recorded using a digital recording device (iPhone).

**Data Analysis**

The aim of the study was to investigate the participant's experiences and reflections through their career transition. Therefore, a qualitative approach was chosen. Smith and Sparkes (2016) stated, that through qualitative interviews the researcher may be giving the opportunity to gain a unique insight into and understanding of the experiences.

Because the transitional model by Stambulova (2003) pre-defined the themes in the data a thematic content analysis approach was chosen. The author transcribing every interview verbatim initiated the analysis. The transcripts were then read and re-read in order to increase familiarity with the data (Christensen et al., 2007). The next part of the analysis was done by coding the data into the predefined themes created by the theoretical model and the research aims. (i.e. *demands, barriers* and *resources* perceived or experienced by the participants)
during the transition, the participants’ coping strategies, in order to make successful transitions and lastly the participants’ lessons learned from the transition).

After the coding, six condensed versions of the transcripts (one for each participant) was created, with information, only relevant for the study aims and copy-pasted to a separate document. The condensed and thematically coded transcripts were then dissected into raw data-units formed by direct quotations or sentences from the participants to increase the validity of the research (Granskär & Höglund-Nielsen, 2008). The transition into an established practitioner created the category profile, while the six higher order themes were deductively created using the athletic career transition model (Stambulova, 2003) as a framework and the study aims as mentioned above. Lower order themes were created both deductively through the theoretical framework and inductively based on the raw data units. Lastly, raw data units were created from similarities in the responses within the overarching category profile (Smith & Sparkes, 2016).

Direct quotes illuminating each of the participants' individual perception of their successful transition were also extracted from the raw data. All interviews were performed in Danish and then translated into English. The translation was done once the condensed transcripts were created to lessen the workload. The translations were completed with the help of a native English-speaking assistant to ensure accuracy and quality of the presented data (Christensen et al., 2007). No assistance was used during the analysis of the transcribed and translated data. No triangulation was used because the author wished to present an objective representation of the participants' experiences and by involving a second subjective pair of eyes the data could lose its spontaneous nature (i.e. the original interpretation of the author) (Roskies, 2013). The transcripts were not returned to the participants for correction because the author felt that adequate detail was received through the recordings and transcripts.
Results

As the purpose of the results was to create a guide for the next generation of SPCs in Denmark as well as giving insight into the individual careers of the established SPCs, categories and higher order themes derived from the theoretical framework by Stambulova (2003), which created the basis for finding commonalities in the participants' stories. The lower order themes and quotations (raw data units) served to represent the differences in the individual responses to the research questions.

Results are initially presented with some background information about the participants followed by the results of the study's aims. These results are presented to illustrate the participants' reflections and experiences during their transition into becoming established SPCs in the Danish field of ASP and are presented in thematic form (For a full overview see Appendix 3). The categories (demands, barriers, resources, coping strategies and Learning experiences) and higher order themes are presented to show commonalities in the data and lower order themes and quotations are presented to show individuality in the stories.

Reason for Starting a Career in ASP

All participants explained that the initial interest in ASP came from their own sporting background (see Felding, 2018). Here there was a common theme of "something was missing in my performance" which lead to them seeking out and perusing careers as SPCs.

Years in the Field

As earlier presented (see Table 1) the participants' (at the time of the interviews) practical experience as a SPC in the Danish field of ASP ranged from 8-30 years (M = 13.3, SD = 8.3).

Length of Transition

As there is no exact time or date marking the successful transition, the length of each of the participants' individual transition is based on feelings of adequate accomplishment to
merit their own successful transition from the novice- to an established SPC. For most of the participants, the feeling of establishment coincided with them becoming part of either the internal or external network in Team Denmark.

Participant # 1, 4-6 years
Participant # 2, 3-4 years
Participant # 3, 4-6 years
Participant # 4, 4-8 years
Participant # 5, 4-6 years
Participant # 6, 4-6 years

**Perceived Demands**

When elaborating on the demands faced during a transition into an established practitioner, raw data units were dissected from the transcripts and then categorized into higher order themes. This amounted to 91 raw data units dispersed over the following four higher order themes; 1) Accumulation of experience (36 raw data units), 2) Creating a network (27 raw data units), 3) Further education (20 raw data units), 4) Making difficult choices (4 raw data units), Raw data units, lower- and higher order themes for the category profile are presented in Appendix C

**Accumulation of experience.** This covered 36 raw data units under 3 lower order themes.

**Effort over time.** (25 raw data units) This was the first lower order theme and the one that has been highlighted the most by all participants was explaining, that it takes a lot of hard work and dedication to make it in this business and achieve your dream. The participants all agreed that the road to becoming an established SPC with enough clientele to create financial stability took “years of hard work” and that “you have to spend all your time for many years to build up a network and establish clientele”.
P1: Making it in this business is not easy, and it takes a lot of hard work. You have to keep performing good services and create a name for yourself that way. P3: I worked so hard creating my business. I started during my bachelors and now I can live off it (8 years later). The money is still not great by it is sustainable.

**Proving your worth.** (7 raw data units) This explains that even after a consultant had created a successful business, it still took a lot of work to convince clubs and federations that sport psychology was an area with a lot of potential if they are willing to put in the resources. And even after the majority of the gatekeepers had been passed, “it is still not an easy task to make the clients understand that change doesn't happen overnight”. The value of a SPC is an investment from a club who wants to progress through sport psychology and takes time and practice.

P1: You have to keep performing good services, then eventually people will recognize your worth. The clients talk so making a good impression matters so you can get reviews.

P3: They can't expect consultants to perform miracles after two sessions.

**Keeping the family together.** (4 raw data units) This illustrates that hard work was not limited to the work in the field alone, but also that some of the participants felt that it took hard work to have a successful family life while trying to become established as a SPC. This theme explains the difficulties accompanied by the amount of time needed to maintain a clientele and the amount of time required traveling if or when the consultant started working with top-level athletes.

P3: We work hard on clarifying issues of when to prioritize work or family. The hardest part was when I got home from Rio (Paralympics) after three
weeks. Now my partner and I needed to sit down and figure out how to balance work and family.

**Networking.** This covered 27 raw data units under 1 lower order themes. Having a *Professional network* (20 raw data units) was a demand that was experienced by the participants in order to get new clients and for exposure. This was because the consultant not permanently employed by a government-funded organization, such as Team Denmark, a lot of their advertisement was by word of mouth and having a solid network of peers and clients was essential for creating more business.

P1: It's all about having a network, jobs don't hang on trees so you have to use all the connections you have to get your name out there.

P4: I was able to get clients through my teaching position. Because I was a teacher in sport psychology, clients came to me seeking my help so it made it a lot easier for me.

P6: We got most of our work through mouth-to-mouth referrals so this was important for us in order to get clients.

**Further education.** This covered 20 raw data units under 2 lower order themes. *Back to school* (11 raw data units) refers to the demands the participants had experienced for a continued need for personal and academic development. Participants all expressed that the philosophies and methods they used during the earlier stages of their careers have been outdated or abandoned and many have taken courses in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) or Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). While several of the consultants, including the ones at Team Denmark, now work exclusively through the ACT mindset as opposed to Psychological Skills Training (PST), as most of them did when starting out as novices.

P2: I studied CBT in Stockholm because I felt my skills were not adding up to what I wanted. No, I use an ACT-based approach and spend a lot of time of
working out my clients' values and from there I include the normal skills from sport psychology (PST).

P3: I work through ACT and use the manual by Russ Harris if you know it? /…/

This way make a lot more sense to me that visualization and goal setting by itself/…/ I had to study this on my own because my education from university was inadequate.

P4: Now, we (SPCs at Team Denmark) work using ACT, and we get specialist in to give lectures and teach us how to apply these methods to the athletes.

**Marketing, business and self-promotion.** (9 raw data units) This elevates the fact that many of the participants had to start up a business from nothing. So, essential skills, such as learning about business management, accounting, web design and marketing was something they all had to do to some extent. Those who didn't feel confident in learning by doing or just wanted to speed up the process paid for courses within these areas. Self-promotion in the form of learning to use social media was something that they never foresaw when first starting out in the field. But due to the frequent use of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram especially by young athletes, they felt it necessary to venture out and promote their businesses via these channels.

P3: I always want to be able to handle things on my own, that's just how I am so I took a business course to learn about accounting and how to manage a business.

P6: I had to learn how to run the business, so I spent a lot of time getting good at it. There is a lot more to think of than you think at first.

**Making difficult decisions.** This covered 4 raw data units under 3 lower order themes. The first lower order theme *Choosing work* (2 raw data units) refers to some of the participants having to uproot their lives and families to pursue a job. "We moved to Fyn, even
though there was no work for her (the partner) because I got a good offer”. *Choosing the family* (1 raw data units) refers to other participants who, on the other hand, had to leave an excellent and steady position in order to keep the family together. *Keeping what they have* (1 raw data units), explains, how some of our participants had to turn down a job they had dreamt about for years because they weren't willing to give up the business they had been working hard to build while they were waiting for the dream job.

P3: The interview lasted around 7 minutes, seriously, they would not let me keep my business, so I said no on the spot /…/ this was hard since it was a dream job.

*Luck.* (3 raw data units) This was not a resource that any of the participants could count on, but still something that seemed to play a large part in their road to a successful career:

P2: You never know what, when or how opportunities will arise, I had only just started working when Team Denmark contacted me through my federation. I didn't even know about this opportunity, but it was the dream job.

**Perceived Barriers**

When the participants expressed which barriers they had faced during this transition, the transcripts yielded 52 raw data units within two underlying higher order themes; 1) *External barriers* (13 raw data units) and 2) *Internal barriers* (39 raw data units). Raw data units, lower- and higher order themes for the category profile are presented in Appendix D

*External barriers.* This covered 39 raw data units under 4 lower order themes. The first barrier was *Needing a second job* (12 raw data units) although, this was mostly a barrier in the early stage of the transition before the participants were able to get enough clients to live of their business and caused frustration for the participants, as it limited the time they could spend working in the applied field.
P1: I was working as a personal trainer and coach as well. I had to get money in the beginning and it limited the time I could work on getting clients.

P3: I was working at the university part-time and it annoyed me that I couldn't spend all my time working as a consultant.

**Hard getting my name out there.** (11 raw data units) This was a barrier that all but one participants felt for many years. This hardship was in part because of the hard work it took to get clients and the difficulties accompanied by not being able to spend enough time on the business in the beginning.

P2: I didn't really know how to get my name out there, I started by working with skaters and it went from there but it took a while.

P6: Getting established and creating a name or brand through self-promotion just takes more time.

**Traveling.** (7 raw data units) This signifies the difficulties accompanied by the increasing success in the later stages of this transitional phase. This barrier occurred when the participants started working with high- or top-level athletes and had to spend more and more time on the road away from the family. The participants with children especially found this to be a difficult obstacle.

P3: When I got home from Rio (Olympics)/…/ after being away from my little girl for three weeks/…/ I had to prioritize differently for a while.

P5: It's hard when you travel and I'm away from my daughter.

**Pressure from the federation.** (3 raw data units) This was a concern voiced by some of the participants, who started working for Team Denmark at a relatively early stage in their career. They didn't feel like they had a lot of experience and even though they were reasonably confident in their abilities and working with Olympians under a federation that expected results and wanted to win medals felt intimidating.
P2: With a label like Team Denmark on your back, you really feel the pressure to deliver.

**Pressure from clients.** (3 raw data units) This was also something that came alongside with working with higher level athletes and teams accompanied with becoming more established. At the later stages of this transitional phase, the consultants started charging relatively high prizes for their services and then felt that there was an additional pressure from the clients to see results.

P5: The clients are expecting results because it's the Olympics, but there are never any guarantees.

**Being alone.** (3 raw data units) Not having a team to bounce ideas off of the last highlighted barrier that arose. This created frustration especially in the beginning years for some of the participants due to a desire for the chance to work with a team or at least a partner.

P3: I wanted to work with a team, but I never had this opportunity and it bothered me.

**Internal Barriers.** This covered 13 raw data units under 3 lower order themes. Self-appointed **Pressure to deliver good work** (7 raw data units) puts emphasis on the fact that all the participants at the earlier stages of their professional career felt pressure to deliver good results and services. This could be accompanied with frustrations of lacking results because the clients weren't doing their homework as instructed, as it would still reflect poorly on their work. These feelings lessened significantly with more experience but were still seen as a cause for stress throughout the whole transitional phase.

P2: I'm a perfectionist and I always want to do a good job /…/ working with people more experienced than me just made me want to perform even more.
P3: In the beginning, I got really frustrated when clients didn't do their assignments because then they didn't improve and that would reflect on me.

**Hating self-promotion.** (4 raw data units) This reflects the fact that some of the consultants primarily in the private sector feel the need to use social media etc. to boost their exposure. This has created uncomfortable feelings because they would rather let their work talk for itself instead of selling promises.

P3: I felt like the growing competition in the small field has made it a necessity to advertise and to actively promote, so I have to do it, but I hated it and the feeling of awkwardness was always there.

**Being a woman.** (2 raw data units) This was expressed as weakness by one of the female participants, not so much because it affected the work she had to do, but more because she was the only woman at the workplace working alongside male colleagues, who were older and had more experience than her.

P2: I felt like the little girl in a room full of men with a lot more experience than me, so I was very intimidated by the others, because of their achievements and respect in the field.

**Perceived Resources**

During the interviews, each story revealed resources the participants found essential and necessary in order to cope with the transitional demands and overcome the barriers they experienced during the transition. The resources consisted of 62 raw data units within two underlying higher order themes 1) *Internal resources* (37 raw data units) and 2) *External resources* (18 raw data units). Raw data units, lower- and higher order themes for the category profile are presented in Appendix E

**Internal resources.** This covered 37 raw data units under 3 lower order themes. The first and most important internal resource of the lower order theme was Previous experience
(17 raw data units) and this signified that all the participants gained a lot of experience during their transition. The transition stretched over half a decade and after the years of training and working in the applied field of sport psychology, the participants each got the professional experience to take on almost any job with confidence.

P1: You just have to keep working and performing good services then you learn more and more.

P2: You don't know a lot at first, but then you keep working hard and the quality of work gets better /.../ later on, you pretty much know how to read the clients.

P4: Experience comes over time, you can't rush it you just have to work with the clients, and then it gets easier.

This increase in confidence directly leads to the second lower order theme.

Confidence. (7 raw data units) This was something the participants saw as a necessity to be successful. The participants felt that without showing confidence in your work the clients won't trust them. This resource increased throughout the transition in tone with the experience and was expressed by the participants to be the two most important keys to establishing themselves.

P5: Confidence came with experience and the more experience I got the more confidence I got.

Drive & motivation. (13 raw data units) This was the third lower order theme and a resource that has been fundamental for many of the participants, because of the amount of hard work that is demanded by practitioners in this field. It also encompasses the love the participants have for seeing development in the clients and in a continued effort to become better at what they do so they can keep providing better services.

P1: It was my drive for better performance that always drove me.
P5: It was motivating to see them (the clients) get better. That always kept me going.

**External resources.** This covered 18 raw data units under 3 lower order themes. Having two jobs (8 raw data units) and thus, having a second income took a lot of pressure off some of the participants at the beginning of this transitional phase. This enabled them to keep working in sport psychology and take jobs that gave them great learning experiences even though it didn't necessarily give them a lot of money.

P1: I got a job as a research assistant at the university part-time, this way I could make enough money to support my business and I also got a lot of work through my colleagues.

**Helpful peers.** (6 raw data units) Having a personal network of colleagues and mentors, also proved valuable for the participants to get help with difficult cases and learning experiences.

P1: We took on all of our cases together as a team at first. This way we got twice the experience and we could help each other out with the cases.

P5: I started working at a psychology clinic under the supervision of an experienced clinical psychologist. This was the first time I had the chance for supervision and it was really cool because I learned a lot.

**Family.** (6 raw data units) This is the last lower order theme and is one that was brought to light by some of those who had life partners and children, who saw this as a great resource, because it made them more understanding and it was something that forced them to forget about work at home.

P3: I share my office-space with my partner (life-partner) I wouldn't have been able to get premises without him.
P5: I think having a family (the kids) was an advantage for me, it kept me from ruminating on my work when I got home because I wanted to spend time with them (the kids).

**Coping Strategies**

When coding the participants' reflections, several coping strategies that were used to facilitate their successful transitions into established SPCs emerged. Coping strategies resulted in 31 raw data units under 4 higher order themes emerged from the transcripts. 1) *Worked hard* (11 raw data units), 2) *Patience* (10 raw data units), 3) *Increased my skills* (6 raw data units) and 4) *Seeking help from peers* (4 raw data units). Raw data units, lower- and higher order themes for the category profile are presented in Appendix F.

*Worked hard.* This covered 11 raw data units and 2 lower order themes. And explains how the participants coped with the specific demand for hard work in order to make a successful transition. The first lower order theme *Put in the time* (7 raw data units) refers to the fact, that every one of the participants had to satisfy the demand for time and therefore spent hours, days and years to get themselves established.

P2: I took me years of hard work before I felt established but eventually I had read so much that I could deduce what the problems were even though I worked with a client in a sport I knew nothing about. In the beginning, I worked with skaters and the challenges were smaller than working with a canoer or an equestrian, where I had to learn about the sport and understand the challenges.

P3: I paid my dues and worked my but off and eventually I established myself and my business, and that's something I'm very proud of.

*Creation.* (7 raw data units) This is the second lower order theme and refers to the fact, that many of the participants used research and publications, as well as spending time on developing their own philosophies and business plans to overcome the demands for continued
development. This also helped them to get recognized and created awareness about not only their own work but also about the Danish field. For many of the participants, this was accomplished while working several jobs and starting up an independent business.

P5: There was a need for a good sport psychology book in Denmark because the ones that are at the moment are very 1980's. /…/ They (previous books) were a lot more research-based and far from the applied field and we thought that there was a need for an applied book.

P4: I found a need to develop my own methods through experiences. /…/ I now derived most of my working philosophies from ancient philosophy. It just made more sense to me. To me, it had no meaning working with one goal, unless there is a sharp picture of how the world looks to you. /…/ my thinking was, they need to be able to have insight and outsight, in order to make an effective constellation of expectations.

**Patience.** This covered 10 raw data units and 2 lower order themes and explains how the participants accepted that a successful career would not happen overnight at therefore saw their time in the field as learning and development. The first lower order theme Trusting the process (5 raw data units) refers to the fact, that the participants saw all their hard work and experiences as means to an end and they would have the patience to see every working opportunity to gain experience. Whether, this was getting more comfortable and spontaneous talking to clients, holding lectures or setting up workshops.

P1: In the beginning, it was all about getting experience. No one becomes an expert overnight so we trusted the learning process and took as many opportunities as we could.

P4: I worked with business people as well as athletes. I needed experience and there was only one way to get it.
**Trial and error.** (5 raw data units) This refers to how the participants saw their earlier work and possible mistakes in their early career as learning. If the consultants didn't know how to handle a case or situation, they would use a trial and error approach and learn from the mistakes and successful outcomes and therefore, use the experiences to be better prepared next cases and the next stages in their career.

P6: In the beginning, it's a lot of trial and error. You just don't know a lot at first, but you learn from your experiences and get better all the time.

**Increased my skills.** (6 raw data units) This was the coping mechanism that was used to deal with both the demand for further education in different approaches such as ACT or CBT. But also, the strategy the consultants used when taking a business class or learning about web design, accounting and marketing. These were all skills that they didn't receive from studying sport psychology in the academic world but were still necessary and valuable skills to collect when building a business.

**Seeking help from peers.** (4 raw data units) This was a coping mechanism that was only available to some of the participants, but who described that getting help from colleagues and mentors was a huge part of getting rid of frustrations accompanied with their work, especially in the earlier years when their experience was more limited than now. When seeking help also included getting interns and partners to create better services as well as delegating workload.

P3: I hated dealing with the social media so I got an assistant to help me with that.

P5: My colleagues and I at the school created our own peer group where we discussed ideas and approaches, this was a great way to get rid of frustrations.

P6: The workload from clients became too big for me to handle. […] I wanted someone to bounce ideas off on so I got an intern.
Lessons Learned from Transition

When asked more specifically about what important lessons the participants gained during their transition into an established SPC 16 raw data units under 5 higher order themes emerged from the transcripts: 1) Building a network (5 raw data units), 2) Finding your niche (3 raw data units), 3) Get active on social media (3 raw data units), 4) It's not always about change (2 raw data units), 5) Clarifying issues (2 raw data units) and 6) Doing things on my own (1 raw data units). There were no lower order themes for this category profile. Raw data units and higher order themes for the category profile are presented in Appendix G.

Building a network. This became one of the cornerstones to their success and perhaps the most important learning experience made by the participants, most of them were unanimous, "it's all about networking".

P1: There aren't a lot of shortcuts in this business, but if you have a good network of colleagues and clients and you're active within organizations and sport municipalities, then you can get a lot of work and exposure that way.

P3: It's all about building a network and pulling on all the strings you have to get your name out there. It takes a lot of work and passion to succeed in the field of applied sport psychology so I learned to build a network.

Finding your niche. This was a learning experience that many of the participants expressed as something they did because they had to. This was also something they would recommend to newcomers in the field.

P1: The jobs don't hang on trees, so somehow you must create yourself and your own career as it looks right now because it is just hard to get in. So, you really have to be good and maybe find a niche where you can distinguish yourself above others.
P5: I have been assigned a focus area within Team Denmark e.g. the swim team or the individual badminton players, so I could focus all my energy on being the expert on that particular discipline.

For others, they used their own sporting background in e.g. figure skating, where they were already personally familiar with the demands of the sport, the sport culture and had a high level of technical understanding. This made it easier to gain respect and confidence from athletes and coaches and the connections they already had with the federation, made it easier to approach the clients.

P2: I started working with figure skaters, and I still do that today because of my expertise. I also work with other sports but my passion always started in skating.

*Getting active on social media.* This was a learning experience that was forced upon some of the participants because they felt that the modern age and the market suddenly demanded it. This was never a plan from the beginning, but now that they started using this form of self-promotion, they can see it creates more business.

P3: You have to be active on social media in order to get exposure. I don't really like it and I have no interest in promoting myself as a person but my business, but I had to start with myself because I was alone. I thought about it a lot, now we use Facebook all the time and try to create awareness about sport psychology.

*It's not always about change.* This was a lesson brought on by experience and sometimes frustration. The realization that, as a SPC, the job isn't always to change everything and come with new approaches to the problems, but sometimes the job is simply to help the client embrace an unchangeable situation and give support where possible.

P5: If someone has a chronic illness, sometimes it's not about making it better, but helping them realize that it's a part of their life.
Clarifying issues early. This was a lesson some of the participants learned when they started being contacted by clubs and federations, who wanted to make a change through sport psychology but hadn't considered that working with sport psychology is developed over time and not an easy fix. Here the consultant had to clarify that it wouldn't be professional to pretend that selling a 4-hour workshop would or could change anything and making such promises would just undermine everything they stood and worked for. Another issue that some of the participants learned, is needed for clarification of product value.

P3: Sometimes a club will hire me to do create a workshop with sport-specific materials and exercises and then they don't understand why they have to pay me X-amount of money when I'm only there for six hours. Then you have to explain that creating the product is what costs money.

Doing things on my own. This refers to the experiences of some of the participants, who never had the chance to work with colleagues during this phase of their career and learned the important lesson, that even though things got exhausting and difficult, they always found a way. This, at first, was seen as a barrier, but it also became a strength and resource that still gives them a lot of confidence today.

P3: I wanted to work with a team, but it just wasn't an option and it bothered me a lot because I wanted someone to trade ideas with, but at least now I know that I can manage almost everything on my own.

Discussion

During their transition into experienced professionals, the participants experienced a high demand for hard work and networking in order to succeed. They also learned that their education was not over since they experienced a continues need for further education to keep up to date with the skills required in the applied field. Proficiency in marketing and self-promotion was a necessity in order to compete in the expanding field, and for some
participants, hard decisions had to be made in order to keep the family together and to further their career. Two participants also listed a demand for taking on interns or partners to delegate the increased workload. Lastly, some of the participants a fair bit of luck by being at the right place at the right time was to blame for their success.

The Danish SPCs expressed several, both external and internal, transitional barriers. One barrier was the continuous need for a second income due to limited cash flow when starting up a business. The SPCs also expressed a barrier in how difficult it was getting recognized while they were novices in the field.

When the participants started getting more clients other barriers appeared. These came from the increased need for traveling and time away from loved ones. Increased pressure from federations and clients to deliver results, was also reported as stressful barriers. Pressure to deliver also became an internal barrier, because many of the participants wanted to deliver good services as novices but lacked the experience in the beginning.

Some of the participants experienced a barrier in not having a team and feeling alone through their transition. Being forced to learn self-promotion became a barrier because some of the participants hated doing it. For one participant, being a young woman also felt like a barrier at this stage of her career.

In order to cope with the transitional demands, the participants facilitated several resources. The participants used their drive and motivation to keep working and finding ways to develop. After the initial years of the transition, the participants gained more and more increased experience which became a resource and also aided through increased confidence when working with clients.

Having a supportive family and peers was also seen as a resource. Having a second job gave financial stability and reduced the stress of being depended on clients.
In order to cope with the demands of the transition, the participants used problem-focused coping in the form of hard work and patience to see every setback as learning. They kept educating themselves in other areas of the field as well as how to run a business. They used emotional support in the form of professional help from peers and mentors. And when the workload got too big they expanded their businesses and got help.

Results in Relation to Theory

Because this study was a continuation of the previous study by Felding (2018) who investigated students transitioning into novice professionals in ASP, the same method was used. Firstly, the athletic career transition model (Stambulova, 2003) created the grounds for the interview guide so the data could be sorted into the category profiles (i.e. demand, barriers, resources and coping strategies) outlined by the model. Secondly, Rønnestad and Skovholt's phases of therapist development (2003) created the framework for determining and more accurately identifying when and how the participants transitioned into experienced professionals (became established).

When coding the data, the results revealed similarities and overlaps in the responses from the previous study by Felding (2018) and the current one. Even so, the author argues that by using these two models together during this investigation, the researcher was able to distinguish several unique transitional demands, barriers, resources and coping strategies experienced by the participants.

Results in Relation to Previous Research

Transitional demands. Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) listed accumulation of experience and learning to use this experience to develop your own style and therapy role, as a demand for experienced professional in order to create trustworthiness. It was therefore not a surprise that the Danish SCPs made the same argument as the role of a therapist and an SPC are very similar in many ways. As noted by both SPCs (McCarthy & Jones, 2014) and
therapists (Rønnested & Skovholt, 2003) trust and the interpersonal relationship with the client is key for success.

While both therapists (Rønnested & Skovholt, 2003) and SPCs have previously listed continued development and education through seminars and workshops across all career phases as a demand, most of the Danish SPCs listed a unique demand for specific education in ACT and CPT as they felt this was the new "golden standard" in the field. Because of the relatively small study population and the fact that all of the participants are affiliated with Team Denmark (who now exclusively work through the use of ACT) it is hard to determine if this demand can be seen as a general one. As mentioned there are no rules about how to practice or which methods to use. It is therefore likely that Danish SPCs not affiliated with Team Denmark have used other approaches and still managed to establish themselves.

It can be argued that continued education and thereby continuing the development of knowledge and skills was a way the Danish SPCs used to cherry-pick what types of methods and frameworks suited their values and temperament best and used this to develop a style congruent with them as a person. The specific need for ACT or CPT could be caused by the Danish academic system not having an established educational program with a focus on applied sport psychology. On the other hand, some of the participants undertook part of their education in Sweden or Norway but still felt that they weren't sufficiently equipped to provide the services they wanted or felt was needed.

The Danish SPCs expressed, much like SPCs in previous studies (e.g. Roper, 2005) that being away from the family when following athletes on tour created the demand for the ability to find a balance between work and family and working hard to maintaining that balance. For therapists, this demand was seen through the therapist having to learn to separate the role of the therapist from the one of parent or spouse, as well as learning to be more present at home while off duty in order to develop into an experienced professional
The Danish SPCs who expressed that keeping the family happy was no idle task further argued that it took that hard work and compromise, sometimes even sacrificing job opportunities in order to uphold this balance.

Building and having a network as a demand has emerged multiple times in previous research (e.g. Simons & Andersen, 1995; Taylor, 2008; McCarthy & Jones, 2014) and is also apparent for the Danish SPCs both when entering the field and when trying to establish themselves. In Denmark, the field of ASP is still very small, and most consultants, therefore, need all the help they can get when trying to establish themselves both in order to get clients and to create a reputation. The demand for a network was less apparent for therapists and counselors in order to get clients but was still seen as a resource when needing help with difficult cases (Rønnested & Skovholt, 2003). This tendency could be because all therapists have to be licensed and therefore automatically get approval from clients, so they don't have the need for word of mouth advertising.

McCarthy and Jones (2014) noted that taking a business course and getting the skills to start up your own company could be a valuable asset and knowledge about running a business would be a demand for most who plan to start their own consulting business. This was also found by some of the Danish SPC who wanted to get on top of this challenge and felt that taking a business course was the optimal way to develop the necessary skills. However, this demand was not found for therapists (Rønnested & Skovholt, 2003) and about half of the Danish SPC had managed on their own through trial and error and with help from friends. This demand, therefore, can't be seen as universal but definitely something to consider for aspiring SPCs, especially if they don't have someone in their network who can help them.

The Danish consultants felt that to transition into an experienced professional, learning to make difficult decisions and finding different ways was a demand. The Danish SPCs expressing that they had to uproot the family and lifestyle and move for a better job was both
consistent with previous findings (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). The fact that some of our consultants had to turn down their dream job because they weren't allowed to continue running the company they had worked hard to build was, however understandable, a new discovery. The rules could be different in other countries, but in Denmark, a government-funded organization, such as Team Denmark, can or will not permanently hire consultants who are still running their own businesses. It was, however, still possible to work as part of the external network, but without the guidance and help from the internal network.

Skills and knowledge about self-promotion and the need for setting up a business page, homepage or website has previously been noted as a demand (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). But the fact that the newer generations must prepare themselves for using social media like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook for business purposes was unique for this study and not something that was expressed as a demand by experienced professional therapists or counselors (Rønnested & Skovholt, 2003). This new demand is probably not only limited to Danish SPCs but more a reflection of the modern nature of information through social media. It must be said, that many of the Danish SPCs managed to establish themselves without the use of social media. However, they all started over 8 years ago where the field was less competitive. This form of self-promotion and advertisement might prove vital for novice consultants not just in Denmark, who want to make an impact on the younger generation of athletes and establish a successful career. Getting published in a respected journal is no easy task, however, sharing your learning experiences and knowledge online is easy and could be equally valuable to consultants in other countries without the chance of mentorships. Learning to use these information channels to get your name out is yet another skill that will be required of future generations of SPCs.

Learning how to delegate as a demand was also a new find for this study. It could be argued, that this is only a temporary situation, as there are evermore SPCs starting businesses
in Denmark. But for those who manage to create a good and respected name for themselves, may still find that the number of clients contacting them are more than they can handle and cause the need to expand the business. As mentioned by the participants in the study, having a team is a valuable resource. So, starting up a business with a partner, as well as getting someone who knows how to handle social media could possibly solve all these demands at the same time.

**Participants’ transitional barriers.** During the transition to an established SPC, the participants experienced many of the same barriers as American, English, Australian and Canadian SPCs did during their novice years, such as hardship in getting their name out there and the need for a secondary job or income (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). The issues regarding increasing time spent on the road and away from family that accompanies a successful career was also a barrier for the established (e.g. Roper, 2005). The absence of a barrier such as this for therapist may indicate that therapists do not usually follow clients around the world even though may need to be reachable via telephone for some clients (Rønnested & Skovholt, 2003).

Negative feelings of increased pressure from the federation and clients to deliver good results such as medals were also consistent with previous findings (McCarthy & Jones, 2014).

Many SPCs (Tod et al., 2007) and therapists (Rønnested & Skovholt, 2003) in the past have highlighted the benefits and importance of collaborating with peers and colleagues. The feelings of loneliness when trying to establish themselves was experienced as a barrier by the Danish SPCs may not be surprising, but still, an important discovery as the aspiring Danish SPCs, who are starting up businesses can't depend on the help of others, neither for supervision nor for debating ideas. The Danish association for sport psychology (DIFO) has made an effort to arrange peer group meetings that could prove helpful, but these are scarce in numbers. A solution to this problem could be for the novice consultants to contact each
other and form their own monthly peer group meeting. Small groups such as these, although time-consuming, could turn out to be a valuable asset both in the form of learning and debating with others, as well as create a strong network of colleagues.

The internal barrier of self-appointed pressure to deliver and the anxiety that accompanied that was consistent with previous findings from both therapists (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) and SPCs (e.g. Tod, 2007; Tod et al., 2011) and has to be considered as a predictable barrier for most practitioners entering the field of working face to face with clients.

Feelings that being a woman in the field was a barrier was consistent with previous experiences by SPCs (Roper, 2002; Roper et al., 2005; Roper, 2008). But more and more female SPCs are becoming established in Denmark as signified by the participants in this study, which may help to lessen this barrier over time. The amount of female role models and possible mentors is also higher now than when the participants first started out in the field. For therapists and counselors being a woman wasn't reported as a barrier (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Maybe because the ratio of male to female therapists is more even or maybe because patients, unlike athletes, don't share the same expectations of getting a male consultant.

For the majority of SPCs, the focus of ASP has been learning to "work the magic" behind and elevating the client to a higher level of performance (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). Being forced to promote and elevate oneself through social media has felt un-natural and forced for some of the participants creating an uncomfortable barrier. The Participants also expressed that overselling themselves in order to get clients also increased the pressure to deliver when being contacted by athletes, as opposed to when clients approached the consultants by referral from a friend or previous client. This find was new for this study and again illustrates, that to get a leg up on the competition, aspiring SPCs may have to practice
these skills during their training, so it won't feel so alien when it later becomes a necessity to sustain the business. A take-home message from the participants' experiences could be that it will be necessary for aspiring SPCs to find a balance between promoting yourself and overselling yourself to not create unrealistic expectations.

Participants’ transitional resources. Using the experience and confidence, that the participants had obtained through the first years of their career as resources when trying to establish themselves was consistent with previous findings from both therapists (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) as well as from SPCs (e.g. Stambulova & Johnson, 2010; McCarthy & Jones, 2014) as was drive and motivation to succeed (e.g. Taylor, 2008). This in contrast to the findings by Felding (2018) who found that the novice SPCs had very limited confidence when working with clients for the first time.

The participants listing family as a valuable resource for emotional and social support as it helped keep the Danish participants grounded when they got home, which enabled them to disconnect from work easier. This was consistent with previous findings both by SPCs (McCarthy & Jones, 2014) and by therapists (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Therapists further expressed how they learned about human behavior from their own kids or spouse which helped them to become better at relating to clients (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The similar finding from the Danish participants in this regard was therefore understandable for this study but to my knowledge unique for SPCs. Being a parent or being in a relationship could, therefore, give the consultant better insight into the lives of clients in a similar situation.

Other resources expressed by the participants were consisted with many of the same ones that consultants from other nations have previously listed, such as helpful peers (Tod et al., 2007), financial stability through a secondary income (e.g. Meyers et al., 2001) and luck in finding the right job at the right time (McCarthy & Jones, 2014).
Participants’ transitional coping strategies. The participants had already experienced the need for hard work during their transition from student to novice professional (Felding, 2018), but at this point, many of them were still studying while starting up their businesses on the side and didn't yet feel the pressure of having to create a cash-flow to stay in business. When trying to establish themselves as independent and successful SPCs, however, the Danish consultants reported coping strategies consistent with previous findings by SPCs such working hard by putting in countless hours developing therapeutic skills through working both paid and unpaid. Working a second job and still spending energy keeping the family (i.e. Taylor, 2008; McCarthy & Jones, 2014). Creating publications and writing books was used as a way of creating awareness about the Danish field and helped the participants becoming established. This strategy has also been highlighted as a way other SPCs have used to establish themselves (McCarthy & Jones, 2014). Working hard was expressed by the participants as a key factor during their transition, but even after they had established themselves, it was still hard work to keep a developing a thriving business, although getting clients got easier at this point.

The participants developed their therapeutic and social skills by trusting the process of development through experience much like therapists have reported doing at the same stage in their career (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Being patient and intrinsically motivated enabled the participants to see every learning experience as a valuable lesson in development. This way of viewing hardship and failures was an important coping strategy the Danish consultants not only during their initial entrance into the novice professional phase (Felding, 2018) but also in order to become established. Using trial and error when faced with new problems has also been reported by both SPCs (McCarthy & Jones, 2014) and therapists (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) indicating that when
faced unique and individual cases experience is the best resource and the best way to gain experience is by testing theories and learning from the mistakes and successes.

Constantly with previous findings (e.g. McCarthy & Jones, 2014), the participants saw their lack of knowledge and experience as a sign that they needed to increase their skills. The majority of the Danish participants specifically did this by studying ACT and how to apply this form of therapy in a sport psychology setting. As mentioned by both participants working in Team Denmark's internal network, this form of therapy is now the golden standard when working in the field. This could be useful information to any neophyte- or novice SPC, who aspires to one day work for or with Team Denmark. Being proficient in the use of ACT could prove to be a useful asset when applying for the chance to work with the Danish top-level athletes.

Seeking help from peers and colleagues was a coping mechanism used by therapists (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003) and SPCs (e.g. Tod, 2007; Taylor, 2008) alike. It was, therefore, not surprising that the Danish consultants also took advantage of this coping strategy whenever possible.

Delegating unwanted tasks, such as social media coverage, as a coping strategy to circumvent the negative feelings associated with having to deal with self-promotion was a new discovery for SPCs this study but also something not expressed by clinical therapist (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The reason for this could, as earlier mentioned, be that the demand for proficiency in the use of social media is a fairly new one. It may also be that the amount of time it takes to be proactive on social media has increased drastically over the last few years thereby limiting the time the SPCs could spend with clients. Either way, becoming sufficient or finding someone who is, could become a necessary coping strategy for many SPCs starting their own business.
Lessons learned during the transition. A valuable lesson for Danish SPCs, as well as for SPCs in other countries (McCarthy & Jones, 2014), was the importance of building a network. This has been the key for many SPC's success. For that reason, this is something students in sport psychology should keep in mind when starting out in the applied field. Being proactive and making an effort to build a network may be, not just a good, but a necessary investment. Many students or novices in applied sport psychology have their own sporting history, therefore a suggestion from the participants was to use these connections and contacting the federation from their previous sport and start building the network there. Other participants explained how, in the beginning, they contacted clubs and federations where they saw the potential for improvement or where they had an interest in the sport. Here they offered to come and give free lectures and learned that it created awareness to themselves and their businesses as well as getting the clients.

Another lesson learned by some of the Danish consultants was finding their niche by specializing within a certain area or sport. For consultants in other countries, finding a sport with fewer experts has been used as a way to minimize competition (e.g. Taylor, 2008). As the competition was relatively small for the generation of already established SPCs in Denmark, it was also a way of narrowing their efforts and thus becoming more proficient in those disciplines. For the next generation, the competition will be considerably higher. One advice given by the Danish consultants was to find an area no one else focuses on yet and then become distinguished in that area.

Not always trying to make changes but accepting things and working with and around the issue was a valuable lesson for some of the participants. Some things will never change and instead of desperately trying to change or ignore them anyway, learning how to help the clients to accept and learn how to deal with the issues instead, was something that came with more experience. This sort of thinking is very closely related to the way of thinking in ACT.
(Harris, 2009) and maybe a realization that came along when Team Denmark starting to use this method.

Learning to be headstrong and clarify issues early in a working relationship was a lesson that, for some participants, took a while to get used to. For the Danish consultants who were hired for a job at a club or federation, an important lesson to learn was how to make sure that the client understood the value in their work. An hour presentation is a lot more than an hour worked and the client must realize and accept this before any services should be provided. Arguing about money after a job was done was a bad experience, so learning to clarify expectations up front became a must. At the same time clarifying what can be expected from a four-hour workshop. Things like a four-hour workshop not being an intervention but an introductory exercise and an eye opener, so clubs or athletes who wanted to make real changes must expect to invest a lot more time.

Learning to do things on their own was the last highlighted learning experience from this study. And even though only one of the participants has worked alone for the majority of her career, it was something most of the participants had to learn at some point during their development. As mentioned there are very few full-time positions in the field. There are also very few opportunities for supervision. This means that many newly educated SPCs will have to work alone and learn to overcome obstacles by themselves. Novices should, therefore, prepare themselves for very little help when starting up their businesses and spend time recruiting the necessary resources to make the transition easier for them.

**Method Discussion and Limitations of the Study**

To investigate the study aims, an interview-based qualitative approach was chosen. This was because the investigation concerned the participants' individual reflections as well as common experiences made during the transition into an established SPC.
One limitation of this way of collecting data is that it is a very time-consuming form of conducting research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Not only to collect the data but to process and analyze it. This forced the study to keep a relatively small sample (only 6 participants), where a quantitative approach, such as survey- or questioner-based studies, could have made a much larger sample possible. A strength to this method though was, that personal reflections from the participants created the possibility for the participants to provide more unique and detailed information than a survey would have allowed (Christensen et al., 2007). All data created in this way is retrospective and therefore subject to recollection bias because the accuracy of the data depended on the participant's memories of events which took place between 5 and 20 years ago.

During each interview, an interview guide was used as a safety measure to ensure that the desired data was collected. The interview guide, however, could create limitations by not containing optimal questions for the study aims. This would result in the need for a second time-consuming follow-up interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), which might not have been possible to arrange with the participants. To get ahead of this potential problem, a pilot interview was done enabling the researcher to test the interview guide and the overall structure of the data collection, so adjustments could be made based on the recordings before the participants were presented with the questions (Christensen et al., 2007).

When collecting qualitative data, the researcher always runs the risk of social desirability bias, because some informants may feel embarrassed by their actions and want to portray a more desirable version of themselves (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In an attempt to avoid this kind of misinformation, the researcher repeatedly assured the participants that all data would be kept confidential and that their anonymity would be protected, as well as ensuring them that the findings of this research would be used for academic use only.
(Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). It was also pressed upon them that the study possibly could help the next generations of aspiring SCPs.

Another problem with the type of data created in the current study is quality control. As the researcher undertook the investigation alone triangulation was not a possibility and all data was therefore collected and analyzed without aid. In an attempt to ensure quality in the collected data and well as determining study criteria such as what makes a SPC established a critical friend's perspective (Stieha, 2014) in the form of a supervisor was used. This helped the researcher gain a clearer picture of what to focus on as well as differentiating unique demands, resources and coping strategies for the participants when analyzing the data and this was found necessary to ensure that the findings would contribute to existing literature.

During the selection and recruitment of the research participants, a purposive and convenience sampling approach was used. This almost exclusively limited the participants to consultants connected to Team Denmark. This was done in an attempt to ensure the level of experience of the participants, but also to limit travel time and costs for the researcher. A pitfall from this type of recruitment could be, where other candidates who could have made valuable contributions to the study were never contacted. It also made it impossible to generalize the results of the study (Christensen et al., 2007). The relatively small sample combined with the limitations of sampling could create a limitation by insufficient saturation of data (Fusch & Ness, 2015), however as the participants agreed on most of the higher order themes, it is argued that the data was sufficiently saturated for this investigation.

As mentioned, one participant situated outside of Denmark created the need for a Skype interview. This type of interview had the disadvantage of creating a less personal and relaxed environment making it harder for the participant to narrate spontaneously (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This way of interviewing was only used due to the long-standing friendship the researcher had with this participant making the argument that a relaxed environment was
possible to achieve over Skype. The personal relationship may though, in itself, have created a limitation to the study, as the participant may purposely avoid a sensitive or embarrassing subject, because of fear that it could affect the personal relationship (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). As earlier mentioned the author performed all interviews as well as transcripts and found no evidence of intentional avoidance of questions or differences in the answers and therefore argues that their contribution was not a limitation to the study.

To accommodate the participants' busy schedules, all interviews were arranged at a place the participants selected. For four of them this meant their workplace, for one it was in a quiet corner in a café and for the Skype interview, the participant was in her office while the researcher was at home. This was a done for the convenience of the participants and to make them feel relaxed enough to share as much of themselves as possible. Christensen et al. (2007) however, make the argument, that doing interviews at the workplace of an informant may cause them to feel too comfortable creating a more conversational interview leading to a time-consuming and unnecessary date.

Each interview was initiated with an introducing of the researcher as a student in ASP as well as an aspiring SPC. The knowledge that the researcher had a personal interest in the information could potentially affect the information given by the participants as they may seek to give personal advice to the author as a student. It may also have influenced the interpretation of the data because the researcher, knowingly or unknowingly, could favor some information over other to serve his own agenda or interests. Here the researcher tried to stay as neutral and objective as possible but can't rule out the possibility. The researcher admittedly found parts of the interviews to be conversational due to his own interest on the subject both as a researcher and as an aspiring SPC in the Danish field but feel that the interviews were still conducted in an acceptable manner. The fact that the author was in fact both the researcher and potential recipient of the information yielded by the investigation
could be viewed as limitation previously which was why he enlisted the help of a supervisor in the attempt to ensure quality in the work.

**Implications**

As illustrated both from previous research and from the findings of this study, becoming successful as an established consultant in the applied field of ASP is no easy task. The findings of this study have tried to increase awareness on what to expect for novice professionals by shining some light on a number of various pitfalls and obstacles established practitioners have gone through. This information may provide aspiring SPCs in Denmark with information on what resources they should aim to lock down and what coping strategies may provide the best chance of overcoming the barriers they'll be facing. In addition, using this information could increase the likelihood that novices could make a successful transition into the experiences and self-sustaining phase of their career and become established. This said, the researcher makes no insinuation that the findings of this study are the only ways of "making it", as there are several Danish SPCs who have used their own unique pathways and become established. The amount of Danish SPCs although, is limited because of the relatively difficult and lengthily pathway of becoming an experienced and accomplished practitioner.

It might be hard for students or novices in ASP to imagine the demands and barriers they will face in their personal life coinciding with their career i.e. starting a family and being on call 24/7. This could be the case with any job, but not many jobs also require weeks or months at a time on the road away from the family to establish a career, which has been one of the major barriers highlighted by the participants in this study. A practitioner who aspires to work with top-level and Olympic athletes needs to consider this when pursuing the dream of becoming an established SPC. One of the participants working in Team Denmark mentioned, that there was a need for SPCs who specializes in young athletes (10-16 years
old), as this is an important developmental age for many sports and Team Denmark doesn't operate with athletes under the age of 18. This area might be better suited for someone not able or willing to spend a lot of time away from family and home.

Something that has been pointed out as both a possible demand, barrier and learning experience, is the fact that the digital age we now live in requires practitioners (at least in the private sector) to become sufficient in the use of social media in order to get more publicity and exposure. Students and aspiring SPCs who want to work in the field may want to use this information to invest money and time in media marketing courses and learning to use Instagram, Twitter, Facebook etc. may get an upper hand when trying to create a name for themselves.

As earlier mentioned having a network of peers was seen as a valuable resource. Students starting up businesses may use the information from this paper to motivate each other to create a small peer network of novice SPCs to further their own development. To these students, it could be suggested that they use these peer groups to learn how to apply and develop approaches such as ACT and CBT, since education in these therapeutic approaches aren't available in sport psychology studies in Denmark yet and it has now been pointed out as "the golden standard" by the SPCs affiliated with Team Denmark.

Ironically several of the participants in this study are currently working as university teachers or college professors in sport psychology but they have still not been able to influence the curriculum to encompass the theoretical approaches they themselves use in the applied field. In an academic setting, therefore, the information about what theories and approaches the SPCs in the field of ASP are using (i.e. CBT and ACT) could be useful for educational institutions. The information could help update and create awareness about how courses should be structured to implement these forms of applications in an attempt to better prepare students for work in the applied field.
For students and educational institutions in Danish ASP to gain access to the information in this study, the author will attempt to publish the findings in a journal for ASP. This should be done with the help of the supervisor in order to reach the targeted audience.

**Future Research**

This study was a continuation of the study investigating; The early transitions in sport psychology practice (Felding, 2018) and provided reflective information about the experiences of the next transitional phase faced by the Danish participants in their career in ASP how to become established. A further study based on the later phases (senior professional) in Rønnestad and Skovholt's model of career development (2003) in combination with the model for career transition (Stambulova, 2003) could reveal interesting results from the Danish practitioners and maybe determine how and why some Danish SPCs decide to become mentors and some don't. It could also give an insight into how far ASP has come to Denmark over the last 20-30 years. It may, however, be difficult to get enough participants to represent this phase, because of the lack of Danish consultants with enough experience to be considered seniors in the field.

To take a different direction for future research; FEPSAC has brought up on numerous occasions the issue concerning the lack legitimization and quality control of services delivered in the field (e.g. Wylleman et al., 2009). This is not just an issue for Danish SPCs but for SPCs in Europe too. FEPSAC have requested context-specific data concerning such issues. New qualitative research investigating the competencies needed specifically by Danish SPCs and what specific competencies are needed by the SPCs for different sports in Denmark as experienced by coaches, athletes and established SPCs could be a step in the right direction for optimizing the services delivered by Danish SPC's. This research could also be in combination with a quantitative approach gathering information and statistical data
on what intervention strategies or theoretical approaches yielded the best results for different sports with Danish athletes.

This new research could help give a nudge to the Danish educational system with gathered data that could help structure a curriculum. This information could also be useful even if there won't be a specific degree in ASP in place. It could potentially help optimize elective courses that are already present or even create additional courses for the Danish students to choose and thus become better prepared for their work in the applied field.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the consultants who participated in this study and who were willing to share their stories and experiences with me, without which this paper would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my supervisor Prof. Natalia Stambulova for her guidance, ideas and patience during the process of this study.
References


## Appendix A
### Interview guide in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highlights:</th>
<th>Index:</th>
<th>Questions:</th>
<th>Comments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of myself and the Purpose of the Study:</td>
<td>- Who am I?</td>
<td>- I am writing a paper on sport psychology.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What is the purpose of the interview?</td>
<td>- I want to investigate the career transitions for established Danish sports psychologists.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines for the interview:</td>
<td>- Time frame</td>
<td>- The interview will be ca. 45 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ethical aspects, computing.</td>
<td>- I want to use digital equipment to record the conversation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Permission to record the conversation.</td>
<td>- All information will be anonymous.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of the consultant:</td>
<td>- Consultant’s professional background:</td>
<td>- Will you please tell me about yourself?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Do you have a sports background?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How did you become interested in sport psychology?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to sports psychology</td>
<td>- Time frame</td>
<td>- What was your first experience with sports psychology?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>- Education</td>
<td>- How did you start your education in sport psychology?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Training</td>
<td>- Did you have any practical training?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mentor?</td>
<td>- Did you have the chance to be “an intern with someone”? If so, who and how?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional career:</td>
<td>- Work opportunities:</td>
<td>- Which work opportunities did you have, when you started?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Transitions</td>
<td>- Can you tell a bit about your career?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How has your career been?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How did you start in the practical field?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Were there any barriers to obtain:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Work opportunities?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Co-workers?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Clientele?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final thoughts:</td>
<td>- Difficulties / barriers?</td>
<td>- What skills are important for a sport psychologist?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Skills:</td>
<td>- If you would advise new consultants on your way into the practical field, what would you say to them?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Advice to the next generation of sports psychologists?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of the interview:</td>
<td>- 5 min left.</td>
<td>- Is there anything I forgot to ask?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What have I learned?</td>
<td>- Do you have any questions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What comments did the consultant come with?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks for the help:</td>
<td>- Thank you for your participation.</td>
<td>- Can I contact you in the following year, if I have any further questions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Contact info. Follow-up.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thanks for the help:
- Thank you for your participation.
- Contact info. Follow-up.
- Can I contact you in the following year, if I have any further questions?
Appendix B
Information letter to the participants

Dear participant (name)
My name is Michael Felding and I am a student at the university in Halmstad under the supervision of Natalia Stambulova and Urban Johnson. I am writing to you because I am conducting a research project for my master’s thesis, investigating the transitional phases as experienced by established Danish sport psychology consultants. How they got started, what difficulties they have faced on the way, what educational pathways they have taken and what helped them develop into the sport psychology consultants they are today.

I have contacted you because you are one of the few well established practitioners in the Danish field of applied sport psychology and I would very much like to learn from your experiences.

I therefore ask if it would be possible to arrange an interview with you any time soon. The interview would last no longer than 45-60 minutes and it would be of great value to my research. Your identity will of course remain anonymous and the results of this study will only be used for academic purposes. Hopefully my data could be a great help for the next generation of Danish consultants in applied sport psychology.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Kind Regards
Michael Felding

Supervisor: Prof. Natalia Stambulova
Högskolan I Halmstad
301 85 Halmstad
phone nr: +46 351 672 37
natalia.stambulova@hh.se
Appendix C  
Category profiles for transitional demands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw data units</th>
<th>Lower order themes</th>
<th>Higher order themes</th>
<th>Category profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It takes a lot of time and hard work to establish yourself, nothing is free in this business. (16)</td>
<td>Effort over time (25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We spent a lot of time developing material and preparing… (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we first started, we would record everything and then spend a lot of time listening to the recording to lean better (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always felt I had to prove myself to the clients, so I worked hard to do that (5)</td>
<td>Proving your worth (7)</td>
<td>Accumulation of experience (36)</td>
<td>Demands (91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to work hard to prove your worth in this business, you only get a few chances in the beginning to make a good impression (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of the time your work demands, you must work hard on prioritizing the family when you can. (2)</td>
<td>Keeping the family together (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We moved back to Copenhagen because there was nothing for my girlfriend there, so I had to commute which made it hard to do a good job. (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I got home from Rio I had to prioritize my family for a while (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s all about having a network. (12)</td>
<td>Professional network (20)</td>
<td>Creating a network (27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The network of clients is where you get most of the clients (8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A personal network of peers is key in the beginning (5)</td>
<td>Personal network (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We did everything together the first few years so we learned twice as much (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you learn in school (during university) is very far from what actually is needed in the field, so I took a course in how to work with ACT. (6)</td>
<td>Back to school (11)</td>
<td>Further education (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We (at Team Denmark) take courses in ACT now because that’s how we work with athletes now. (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I went to Stockholm and took an education in CBT (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I studied a lot of philosophy and derived my own theories from that, is just makes more sense to me. (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media may be essential from now on if you want to be in this business now (5) I took a business course, because I knew nothing about starting a business. (3) You should know how to promote yourself. (2)</td>
<td>Marketing and self-promotion (9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had to move because I got offered a good job. (2)</td>
<td>Choosing work (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had to leave my job, because it didn’t work out with my family and living situation (1)</td>
<td>Choosing Family (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really wanted to work for Team Denmark, it’s what I dreamt about. But they wouldn’t let me keep running my business, so the interview only lasted, seven minutes before I had to turn them down. (1)</td>
<td>Making difficult choices (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was lucky enough to always find work. (2) I didn’t even know about this opportunity, but it was the dream job. (1)</td>
<td>Luck (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D

#### Transitional barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw data units</th>
<th>Lower order themes</th>
<th>Higher order themes</th>
<th>Category profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You need a second job, because you don’t really make any money. (6)</td>
<td>Needing a second job (12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worked at the university as well. (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had to work as a trainer too. (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is hard to establish yourself. (6)</td>
<td>Hard getting my name out there (11)</td>
<td></td>
<td>External (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to work hard to create your own brand. (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The traveling can be hard at times, especially when you’re away from your family. (7)</td>
<td>Traveling (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt there was a huge weight on me because I had Team Denmark’s label on me in the beginning (3)</td>
<td>Pressure from federation (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The athletes wanna see results, and they expect them now. (3)</td>
<td>Pressure from athletes (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to work with team it just wasn’t possible (3)</td>
<td>Being alone (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have always been hard on myself, because I wanna do a god job. (5)</td>
<td>Pressure to deliver good work (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to prove myself (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hate promoting myself, it feels unnatural. (3)</td>
<td>Hate self-promotion (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Internal (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never liked promoting myself, so I never did it (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt like a little girl in the men’s office (2)</td>
<td>Being a woman (2)</td>
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</table>
### Appendix E

## Transitional resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw data units</th>
<th>Lower order themes</th>
<th>Higher order themes</th>
<th>Category profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You don’t know a lot at first, but then you keep working hard and the quality of your work gets better (7) You get a lot of learning experiences the first few years. (5) I became more spontaneous (3) I learned a lot from working with addicts (2)</td>
<td>Previous experience (17)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Internal (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was very driven (7) We kept working hard to always get better. (5) My drive and motivation is why I can support myself now (3)</td>
<td>Drive &amp; motivation (13)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resources (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experience made me more confident (4) I didn’t doubt myself as much. (3)</td>
<td>Confidence (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a second job took pressure of (5) I could learn from my colleagues (at the university). (3)</td>
<td>Having two jobs (8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was great having colleagues with more experience. (3) We helped each other, and that’s how we learned. (2) I had the chance for supervision and it was really cool. (1)</td>
<td>Helpful peers (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>External (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family helped me disconnect. (3) Being a parent gave me perspective. (2) I share my office-space with my partner. (1)</td>
<td>Family (6)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F
Coping strategies used during transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw data</th>
<th>Lower order themes</th>
<th>Higher order themes</th>
<th>Category profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I put in a lot of energy and time into getting my business running (2)</td>
<td>Put in the time</td>
<td>Worked hard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spent a lot of time learning, so I could get better. (2)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had to work three different jobs. (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>We did a lot of free work at first to get in contact with potential clients. (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coping strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We thought a better applied book was needed so we set out to write one. (1)</td>
<td>Creation (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I published papers to get more distinguished (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to trust the process of learning, because you just don’t know a lot at first. (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I paid my dues. (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I had to learn somehow so I took all the jobs I could. (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Patience (9)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I didn’t always know what to do, so we tried something and saw if it worked. (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a lot of trial and error the first few years, that’s just part of the process (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reality is far from what I learned at school, so I read up on ACT and that’s now how I work. (3)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got certified in CBT and studied ACT. (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I took a business course, because I didn’t know anything about running a business. (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I took a course in web design, because I like to do things on my own. (1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>We formed a kind of peer group where we could exchange ideas and strategies. (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased my skills (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could always seek help from my peers and I did that whenever the need arose. (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hated dealing with the social media, so I delegated the job to someone else. (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to share my ideas and teach, so I expanded the business to get help with the number of clients. (1)</td>
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</table>
## Appendix G
Lessons learned from transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw data units</th>
<th>Lower order themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There aren’t a lot of short cuts in this business, but if you have a good network/…/ then you can get a lot of work that way. (3)</td>
<td>Building a network (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s all about building a network and pulling on all strings to get your name out there. (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you have a good network, the business becomes easier. (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I started with soccer because it’s a big interest of mine and now I work mainly with soccer players (1)</td>
<td>Find your niche (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So, you really have to be good and maybe find a niche where you can distinguish yourself above others. (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I mostly do group sessions cause that’s my best way of coaching (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to be active on social media in order to get exposure. (2)</td>
<td>Get active on social media (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the times are demanding consultants to use these channels (Facebook and Instagram) and the young athletes use them all the time. (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never had much help, so I had to work things out (1)</td>
<td>Doing things on my own (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/…/ but at least now I know that I can manage almost everything on my own. (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then you have to explain that creating the product is what costs money. (1)</td>
<td>Clarifying issues (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned that I had to clarify issues with my family (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/…/ sometimes it’s not about making it better but helping them realize that it’s a part of their life. (1)</td>
<td>It’s not always about change (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>