

PERCEPTIONS OF SPORT RETIREMENT BY CURRENT STUDENT-ATHLETES

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## ABSTRACT

This study focused on the problem of college student-athletes retiring from their sports unprepared for life outside of sanctioned athletics. The purpose was to identify if a current student-athlete believes he/she is prepared for a career life after competitive college athletics and who the student-athlete feels should provide guidance into the sport retirement transition process. The research questions were: (1) Do current student-athletes feel they are properly prepared to enter into sport retirement (voluntary or involuntary) by their institution?; (1a) Do current student-athletes feel the institution/organization they are associated with should provide athletic retirement planning or aid?; (2) Does the relationship the athlete has with his/her coach affect the goals of sport retirement for that athlete?; (3) Does an athlete's motivation for collegiate participation affect his/her goals for life after competitive sport?; (4) Do the current student-athletes have a preference about who the information comes from regarding sport retirement?; (5) Does a current student-athlete's economic status affect his/her goals for the sport retirement process?

A quantitative approach was used in this study to provide a perspective on the planning of current student-athletes for a future career once their sports eligibility has ended.

For research question 1 and 1a, findings showed that while the majority of current student-athletes have a developed future career plan for life after competitive athletics, 15% do not have an established future plan. Regarding research question 2, one's relationship with his/her coach did not influence the student-athlete from having a developed future plan. For

research question 3, athletes who participated in collegiate athletics for educational reasons were more likely to have an established career plan. For research question 4, the current student-athletes felt the athletic department should provide the information about the sport retirement transition process. Regarding research question 5, a student-athlete's economic status had no significant effect on one's development of a plan for post competitive sport. Helping student-athletes in collegiate athletics should be a priority for preparing them for a future career outside of their sanctioned sport. These student athletes without an established plan may be at risk for a difficult transition process.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my very supportive and understanding parents, Bill and Karen Leffler. They both played vital roles in influencing the decisions that would shape my life and mold me into the person I am today. Their strength encouraged me to continue on this path even through the difficult times. I thank you and God so much for having such a positive impact on my life.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

For some collegiate athletes, sports are a way of life and personal fulfillment. Competitive athletics are their passion and protective shell from the stresses or uncertainty of the working world (Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2004). A college athlete's sports career can be defined as "the multi-year sports activities of the individual aimed at high level sports achievements and self-improvement in sport (Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2004). As the NCAA recognizes, however "almost all student-athletes are going pro in something other than sports" (NCAA, 2007-2008, p. 4). According to the specific career chosen, this includes the transition process and adaptation into post-sports life; collectively described as a career transition from a sport (Torregrosa, Boixados, & Cruz, 2004).

Sport retirement can result in many difficulties for the collegiate athlete (Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2004). Often neglected in both the empirical and lay literatures, however, is consideration of the transition process and adaptation into post-sports life (Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2004). Each year thousands of athletes in competitive athletics leave their sports and make the transition into sport retirement. Athletes must adjust to a life without sanctioned sport competition for a profit, which can be in the form of money, education, or personal gains after sport retirement. Erpic, Wylleman, and Zupancic (2004) found that about 39% of athletes plan for life after competitive athletics while 26% of athletes give no thought to life post organized athletics. They also found that 56% of former athletes reported experiencing

feelings of underachievement during the sport retirement phase. McPhereson (1984) suggested that athletic career termination should be viewed as a problem solving process since in order to have success one must re-adjust his/her life. Sport retirement can be viewed as a completion of his/her competitive sport life (Brady, 1988; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). An athlete's transition into sport retirement is usually dictated by the factors relating to his/her retirement, such as burnout, being cut from team, injury, and/or age (Hill & Lowe, 1974; Mihovilovic, 1968; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Rosenburg, 1980). Sport retirement can either be voluntary - where the athlete chooses to end his/her sporting career - or involuntary - when the athlete is forced to retire. An athlete who voluntarily retires usually has a happier transition than one who is forced to retire (Baillie, 1993; Tate, 1993). Some athletes feel unqualified to perform any activities besides their sports (Pearlman, 2004).

Psychologists have termed a negative sport retirement as a stressor in one's life (Daniel, 2002). During a negative transition, a retiring athlete is unable to let go of his/her sport and adjust to life without formal competition in that sport (Daniel, 2002). In order to decrease the chances of negative transition and reduce stress, athletes should be prepared for sport retirement so that a negative transition does not occur. A way to ease the transition into sport retirement would be to provide the athlete direction into life outside of competitive athletics. The transition into sport retirement can be overlooked by people who supported the athlete during his/her competition years, but it is an important period in an athlete's life since it affects him/her for the rest of his/her life.

When an athlete transitions into sport retirement, he/she is leaving the society he/she has known for a long time. This transition includes factors such as built in support structures and the recognition that accompanies the athletic status. Belonging to a sport allows a person to be in a

culture of similar beliefs and values (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). While participating in an elite sport or professional sport where personal monetary gain is common, an athlete often develops a self-identity that is directly linked to that specific sport (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). Within the collegiate athletic society, that athlete is able to develop his/her life skills related to that society.

Self-identity is a personal perspective that allows an individual to identify himself/herself in life, which may help define one's character. This identity is used to develop one's perceptions of himself/herself in life. The athlete gains a recognition of belonging to a specific group or sport that enhances an athlete's self-efficacy, which can be defined as the student-athlete's perception about his/her capabilities to influence life events (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005). In a realm outside of competitive or sanctioned athletics, the student-athlete may not be known or may not have developed his/her self-identity or self-efficacy (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005; Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001; Wolff & Lester, 1989). In collegiate athletics, athletes have much control or influence over events in their lives, which can lead to a positive self-identity (Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001; Wolff & Lester, 1989). Once an athlete transitions out of the sporting world, his/her self-identity needs to be re-established – to enable the athlete to feel as if he/she has much influence in his/her life events (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005). The athletic identity may be important to an athlete, therefore when an athlete retires he/she must develop a new self-identity and re-establish him/herself in a new world (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). Self-identity is a personal perspective that allows an individual to identify himself/herself in life, which may help define one's character.



## **Sport Retirement Defined**

Retirement is defined as the withdrawing of oneself from a specific activity (Brady, 1988). Sport retirement is defined as the separation of an athlete from his/her sport (DiCamilli, 2000). Sport retirement can either have a positive or negative impact on a person's life. A positive transition occurs when the athlete has no problem adjusting to life without his/her sport on a regular basis (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006; Tate, 1993). Retirement is not a single event or state, rather it is a series of phases where an individual relinquishes certain roles in his/her life and acquires other activities (Brady, 1988). Retirement can also be described as a multi-dimensional process due to all of the factors that can affect the type of transition that may be experienced (Wheeler, Malone, Van Viack, Nelson, & Steadward, 1996). Athletic career termination is a process that all athletes experience at some point in their lives.

An individual who prepares for retirement, may experience certain phases. Brady (1988) describes nine phases that may be associated with retirement. The pre-retirement phase occurs years or months prior to retirement when the individual has a vision for life without sport. The near phase is when the person has a specific date or time frame when retirement is to occur. If retirement is planned, the third phase is the honeymoon phase where the individual may experience a period of bliss and experiment with new social roles and activities. The retirement routine phase occurs when the individual develops a normal daily routine that brings him/her happiness. In the rest and relaxation phase, the individual goes through a period of low activity. In the sixth phase, or the disenchantment phase, the retiree may experience a let-down period where the blissful feeling is diminished. Phase seven, or the re-orientation phase, occurs when the retiree pulls himself/herself together to begin activities again in order to achieve happiness. The routine phase is described as the individual becoming engaged in daily activities that have

little variety. Some people pass into this phase directly from the honeymoon phase while others reach this stage after struggling through the other phases. The final phase, labeled termination, may occur if the individual returns to his/her original activity. A retiree may not experience all of these phases or remain in any one phase for the same amount of time. While these phases of retirement were originally designed to describe an individual retiring from work, sport can be viewed as being similar to a job, due to the time commitment, scholarship or pay, social aspect, and the daily routine experienced in each situation. Retirement is an individual process that can elicit different responses for each person involved.

Having direction before sport retirement occurs, may allow the student-athlete to have a smooth transition through the sport retirement process (Tate, 1993; Werthner & Orlick, 1982). A negative transition may occur when the athlete does not plan for a future career or activity outside of athletic competition prior to sport retirement (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Wylleman et al. (1993) that planning a career path before sport retirement eases the transition into sport retirement, because it gives the athlete something to look forward to after leaving his/her sport. Baillie and Danish (1992) reported from a survey of 260 retired elite and professional athletes that half of the athletes who planned for sport retirement had a positive transition. Athletic retirement planning can be associated with higher satisfaction in life and career (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). This planning also may lead to less negative and emotional actions during the retirement process (Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityle, 2004; Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001).

## **Statement of the Problem**

A more difficult retirement transition is associated with a strong athletic identity and therefore needs to be dealt with before that athlete retires. The embedded athletic self identity may provide a strong internal motivation for the student athlete that may make it difficult for that person to form a new self-identity outside of athletics.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Fernandez, Stephan, and Fouquereau (2006) found that many current athletes do not feel well informed about their looming career end. Those who did report feeling informed reported having less anxiety about their future. Sport retirement is inevitable for any athlete though some experience it sooner than anticipated. For any athlete entering sport retirement, a positive transition is always desired but not always achieved. This dissertation is aimed at determining if current student-athletes of Division I and Division II institutions feel they have been adequately prepared for retirement from their respective sports.

The purpose of this study is show if current student-athletes believe they are prepared for sport retirement that may occur at any time. The purpose of this study is also to determine who the student-athlete feels should provide the information in order to have a positive experience with sport retirement.

## **Research Questions**

1. Are current student-athletes prepared to enter into sport retirement (voluntarily or involuntarily) by their institutions?

- 1a. Do current student-athletes have a plan for a career or life after sanctioned sports from their institution?
2. Does the relationship the athlete has with his/her coach affect the goals of sport retirement for that athlete?
3. Does an athlete's motivation for collegiate participation affect his/her goals for life after competitive sport?
4. Do the current student-athletes have a preference about who the information comes from regarding sport retirement?
5. Does a current student-athlete's economic status affect his/her goals for the sport retirement process?

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study may lead to a better understanding of the emotions and reasoning that a student-athlete may experience when transitioning into sport career retirement. The study may also have an impact in the designing of an educational program or presentation that can be easily used by institutions to educate student-athletes on the choices in life once they have retired from their sport.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Sport retirement* is the separation of an athlete from his or her sport and competition (DiCamilli, 2000).

*Transition* is defined as an obvious change in one's life or career, with a positive transition being making a contributing impact within society and a negative transition as having a difficult time adjusting to a life without sanctioned competitive athletics (Stankovich, 1998).

*Voluntary retirement* is choosing by the person to end his or her career (Tate, 1993).

*Involuntary retirement* is a forced departure from a sport (Schell, 1995).

*A Division I institution member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)* must sponsor at least 7 men's and women's sports, play other Division I schools, meet attendance requirements for football contests, and meet minimal and maximal financial aid awards as stated by the NCAA guidelines (NCAA, 2011).

*A Division II institution member of the NCAA* is defined as sponsoring at least 5 men and women sports, meet participant and contest minimums, play at least 50% of season games with other Division II institutions, meet maximal financial aid awards per the NCAA guidelines, and must be financed through the institution like any other institutional program (NCAA, 2011).

*Self-identity* is described as how a person views himself/herself in life (Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007).

*Athletic identity* is defined as how a person views himself/herself in regards to the sport he/she competes within on a regular basis (Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007).

*Student-Athlete* is defined as any person participating in sanctioned competitive athletics at the collegiate level (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990).

## **Rationale for the Study**

Sport retirement is defined as the separation of an athlete from his or her sport (DiCamilli, 2000). At one time or another all athletes of any level of competition experience

sport retirement and must learn to adapt to the real world. Sport retirement can either be a positive or negative transition. A positive transition occurs when the athlete has no problem adjusting to life without his or her sport on a regular basis such as competing on a team (Tate, 1993). Due to the lack of consistent methodologies and reporting methods in the literature, this topic is not widely reported, and seems to be a problem area.

Having direction before sport retirement occurs allows for the athlete to have a smooth transition into sport retirement (Tate, 1993; Werthner & Orlick, 1982). A negative transition occurs when the athlete does not plan for a future career or activity prior to sport retirement (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Wylleman et al. (1993) found that by planning a career path before sport retirement eases the transition into sport retirement, because it gives the athlete something to look forward to after leaving his or her sport. In a survey conducted by Baillie (1992), half of the 260 retired elite and professional athletes surveyed, stated that planning for sport retirement allowed them to have a positive transition into sport retirement. Athletes have a difficult time with the transition partly because as they are transitioning out of their athletic careers at a time when most people in this age range are beginning their professions (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The transition can also be difficult because at the time, instead of the professional athlete usually planning pre-competition meals and game strategies, the athlete must deal with detraining and retirement (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Collegiate student-athletes are similar since they spend much time planning meals and competition strategies as well. Collegiate athletes, though, have the academic institution, which is supposed to help these student-athletes prepare for a professional working career. Little current research has focused on the collegiate student-athlete's preparedness for life after sanctioned collegiate athletics. With sport retirement transition comes planning for a professional career (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The transition

into sport retirement can either have a positive or negative effect on an athlete's life, depending on how well that athlete prepared himself/ herself for the future.

The sport world may be different from the "real world" in that athletes may be cherished and known for their accomplishments, whereas in the real world, the athletes may not be well known or has lost their self-identity (Wolff & Lester, 1989; Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001). Athletic identity is important to an athlete. Once an athlete retires, he/she must form a new self-identity and re-establish himself/herself in a new world (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Sport retirement may be difficult if the athlete has a strong athletic identity (Grove, Lavalley, & Gordon, 1997). With sport retirement, a new social role is formed by the athlete. Upon career termination, the athlete experiences a loss of teammates, coaching staff, and the security of his/her sport competition. An athlete must form a new social role outside of his/her sport in a working or career environment. One possible reason an athlete may not try to form a new social role is because he/she feels isolated from his/her former sport and teammates so he/she forms an antisocial attitude (Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; Wolff & Lester, 1989). A new social role is needed for a positive adjustment into society outside of the athletic realm.

Some athletes experience a negative transition process with difficulties adjusting to real-life. Along with forming a new social role comes the psychological, interpersonal, and financial adjustments that must be made by the athlete, since everything is changing in his/her world by leaving the sporting realm behind (Lavalley & Anderson, 2000; Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001). Grove, Lavalley, Gordon, and Harvey (1998) studied 2000 retiring athletes and found that twenty percent experienced "psychological adjustment difficulties." Adjustments

into this new world are affected by the following: sport retirement reasons, a positive or negative transition, and the coping mechanisms used during that transition period (Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001). Some athletes may turn to drugs during the athletic retirement process to elicit the euphoria feeling that occurred during athletic competition (Daniel, 2002). Depression can occur during this period because of the need to develop a new self image (Daniel, 2002). During the development of a new self image, the individual may become angry, miserable, or demanding, because he/she may not know how to deal with himself/herself or others (Daniel, 2002). Psychological difficulties may be experienced during a negative athletic career termination process.

Many athletes, especially elite athletes since this has become their career and source of income, do not plan for the future (Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001). The more support and direction athletes have, the better the transition into the real world. The three most common reasons for involuntary sport retirement are burnout, deselection or being cut from the desired team, and injury. Burnout can be caused by over training of the athlete (Flor, 1996). When retiring due to age or a forced retirement, some athletes feel vulnerable and turn to “chemical” mediators such as cigarettes, cocaine, diuretics, and laxatives, for support (Thornton, 1990). This may help the athlete feel he/she is able to maintain his/her competitive body weight and stay in control while trying to prove he/she should not have had to retire (Thornton, 1990; Wolff & Lester, 1989). This can, in turn, lead to more problems for the athlete’s future, as discussed later in this paper. Retirement due to injury may be related to fear, anxiety, and a loss of self-esteem (Rotella & Heyman, 1986). Ogilvie and Howe (1982) found that when athletes retire due to injury, they sometimes suffer from distress, which has a tendency to develop into depression, substance and alcohol abuse, and possible suicide attempts (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Social



withdrawal is not uncommon when retiring due to an injury (Lewis-Griffith, 1982). Webb, Nasco, Riley, and Headrick (1998) found that those retiring due to an injury had the most difficult time adjusting when compared to the athletes who had some control over or expected retirement.

The reason behind an athlete participating in his/her sport may dictate the type of transition that student-athlete may have as well as having a developed future plan beyond competitive athletics. Chartrand and Lent (1987) reported that one's attitude has a large impact upon one's own behavior. With that, collegiate student-athletes participating in athletics for an education may have a positive outlook to leaving one's sanctioned athletics to pursue other career interests. Student-athletes motivated by recognition and plans to participate beyond competitive collegiate athletics may have a more difficult sport retirement transition. One's motivation for competitive sport participation may have an impact upon the sport retirement process.

Sport retirement happens each year in every sport and at every level, so it is not uncommon nor does it only affect only a few people. The athletes facing sport retirement should have guidance and direction into the next phase of their lives (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). As suggested by Pearson and Petitpas, preventing the problems that may arise with sport retirement is necessary. Coaches can provide guidance to athletes, which can lead to a successful sport retirement (Ryska, Hohensee, Cooley, & Jones, 2002). Facilitating sport retirement is not limited to just counseling but also can be in the form of guidance from peers, coaches, professionals, or others whom the athlete respects. Brooks, Etzel, and Ostrow (1987) conducted a survey on athletic retirement and found that collegiate athletic advisors provided acceptable guidance to athletes' facing sport retirement.

## **Overview of Methodology**

For this study, a questionnaire containing originally designed survey called the General Attitude Survey, questions from a modified version of the Student Athletes' Motivation Towards Sports and Academics Questionnaire (SAMSAQ), modified questions from the Motives for Physical Activities Measure-Revised (MPAM-R), and a modified version of the Athletes' Retirement Decision Inventory (ARDI) were utilized. The surveys were modified by the verb tense and not all of the original surveys were used in this research study. This quantitative approach was designed to gain an insight into the thought processes of current student-athletes regarding athletic retirement and the feelings about sport participation on this life event. Four Midwest institutions – 2 Division II and 2 Division I - were asked to participate in this study.

## **Limitations**

Limitations of this study included subject honesty when answering the survey and the cooperation of the institutions that agreed to participate in this study. Another limitation of this study included a limited number of responses with the income question on the survey. Also in regards to the income question, the large variance of the income reported by the participants violated a normal distribution therefore the data from this question was not utilized for analysis. Using only four Midwestern universities would be another limitation since more schools of a diverse location were not surveyed. A low reliability was found with the survey scale dealing with the student-athlete motivation, which was not found in previous literature. The results were still utilized but with this limitation taken into consideration. Another limitation was the limited amount of literature focusing on the sport retirement of current collegiate athletes.

## **Delimitations**

The researcher limited this study to using only current collegiate student-athletes. Professional athletes, not attending a college institution, were excluded from this study to limit the population sample to focus on academic institutions providing guidance for life after sanctioned athletics. Previous research has focused on professional athletes recalling on past experiences. This research examined a population of current student-athletes. Another delimitation of this study was the use of only college student-athletes from Midwest institutions as a convenience sample.

## **Assumptions**

In this study, it was assumed that the participants answered honestly when completing the questionnaire. It was also assumed that the questionnaire is an accurate measurement of the sport retirement attitude. A basic assumption of this study was that the participants understood the directions of the questionnaire. In the analysis of the results, it was assumed that if a participant answered the qualitative question, pertaining to having a plan in place for life after competitive athletics, with having a specific plan, it was due to the preparation from the academic institution.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Background**

Sport retirement affects all athletes at some point in their careers. Each athlete responds differently to not being able to participate competitively in his/her sport. Some athletes have positive transitions while others experience negative transitions. Haerle (1975) found that some athletes have a tendency to postpone or avoid the topic of sport retirement. This can leave the athlete unprepared for the future, creating a difficult transition. When an athlete has a strong emotional attachment to his/her sport or team, career termination becomes difficult (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006). The way an athlete responds to retirement depends greatly on the reason for his/her retirement.

The common reasons for any athletic retirement include burnout, being cut from the team selection, injury, and age. Athletes' reasons for sport retirement may play a role into the adjustment level into occupational life (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006). The method of entering sport retirement, either voluntary or involuntary may change an athlete's outlook on the situation. An athlete's commitment to his/her sport will affect how well the athlete adjusts to life after competition. For example, a strong commitment may lead to a negative transition into sport retirement. Theories have been established to try to explain why athletes respond the way they do to the transition period into life without competition, since every athlete responds

differently. Psychological repercussions and negative consequences such as identity crisis, emotional difficulties, decrease in self confidence, and a decrease in life satisfaction can occur with an unprepared athletic retirement (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006).

## **Sport Retirement**

DiCamilli (2000) defines athletic retirement as the separation of an athlete from his/her sport. Some athletes feel a sense of relief after retiring, making their transitions a positive experience (DiCamilli, 2000). Retirement brings a great deal of change in the life of an athlete. For instance, the athlete must begin to deal with an identity crisis (loss of athletic role), devaluation of status (not looked at as an athlete), reduced income (loss of scholarship or payment for participation), and a need for activity (DiCamilli, 2000; Wolff & Lester, 1989). Upon retirement, the athlete must shift his/her identity from the competitive sports realm he/she participated into the real world.

Athletic identity involves putting a great deal of importance on participating in a sport and being attuned to the athletic domain (Stankovich, 1998). The athletes who have a strong commitment to their sport are likely to have an identity crisis upon retirement (Stankovich, 1998). The degree of such an identity crisis depends on how much of the athlete's personal identity is centered in athletics (Stankovich, 1998). When forced to retire, an athlete may experience an identity crisis when his/her main source of self-esteem - sport - is terminated (Fender, 1988). Also, with a difficult or stressful retirement, an athlete's health may suffer (Fender, 1988). A positive transition can occur by having an open, caring attitude with a large circle of friends (DiCamilli, 2000). Coaches also play a part in the athlete's transition. If the athlete feels that he/she possesses a good relationship and an open communication with his/her

coach, then a positive transition is expected (DiCamilli, 2000). A linear relationship exists between the coach and athlete in regards to communication. A positive open communication between an athlete and coach is more likely to result in a positive transition. Because athletes and coaches must devote the majority of their energy to their sport, little time is left to prepare for retirement (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Shaffer, 1991). In turn, this little devotion of time to planning for sport retirement may lead to a difficult transition. Increasingly, those athletes who had attained their sporting goals reported having an easier time with their sport retirement (Fender, 1988).

Each athlete handles athletic retirement in his/her own way. How an athlete responds during the transition period of retirement is based on the athlete's perception of stress, personal resources, coping strategies, and social issues (DiCamilli, 2000). An athlete also responds to the transition emotionally. Some common feelings an athlete may experience during retirement include: frustration, satisfaction, self-awareness, fulfillment, indifferent resentment, sadness, success, shock, deprivation, happiness, abandonment, depression, and pride (Sadewater, 1991). According to a study by Fender (1988), most athletes had a higher sense of personal control while participating in their sport and reported a lower level of self-confidence upon retirement. Usually after the initial transition stage, the athlete eventually becomes satisfied with his/her retirement (Fender, 1988). Athletes who plan for sport retirement rarely make negative life choices that do not provide any benefit to the person or society (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Athletes who plan for this event are also more likely to seek resources that would aid them in achieving a positive athletic retirement.

Retiring athletes may have an avoidance-oriented strategy in that they are unwilling to admit or progress through the athletic retirement process (Grove, Lavalley, & Gordon, 1997;

Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Stambulova, Stephan, and Japhag (2007) found athletic retirement to be a process that is multi-dimensional, that has changes in several aspects of one's life, and that involves coping strategies by the athlete. Sport career termination can have a large impact on an athlete's life, and the retiring individual may need some guidance to help with this transition.

Athletic retirement can occur at any age, often causing the athlete to be unable to prepare for the transition mentally (Fender, 1988). Unlike work-retirement age, which is preset, sport retirement does not have a set age. In sports, the athletes retire earlier than the general population, making the transition difficult (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006; Stankovich, 1998). Careers are cut short by unexpected events, such as injury and being released from the team or can last until the athletes' eligibility ends. Another reason for athletic retirement is personal disengagement. Some athletes experience a loss of interest in their respective sport and voluntarily quit (Boothby, Tungatt, & Townsend, 1981; Sands, 1978). Disengagement from one's competitive sport may be due to financial conditions or for the athlete to become employed to earn money (Boothby, Tungatt, & Townsend, 1981; Sands, 1978). Some athletes become involved with other activities or develop interests outside of athletics that may cause them to disengage from their competitive sports (Brown, 1983; Burton & Martens, 1986).

To the athlete, retirement means the end of an era or a large part of his/her life. Sport retirement is made difficult due to the demands placed on the athlete by society. Upon retirement, the athlete feels like a "has been" (Sadewater, 1991). Among athletes, retirement is also known as a "social death" since they are leaving their team and social network (Sadewater, 1991). The term "social death" comes from the reactions some athletes experience in that they follow those of a terminally ill patient, which include denial, anger, bargaining, and acceptance

(Tate, 1993; Wolff & Lester, 1989). Retirement from sport may make the athlete feel useless, especially going from a known athlete to a person who does not possess an athletic identity (Shaffer, 1991). Retirement separates the athlete from his or her comfort zone (Sadewater, 1991). After retirement some athletes enjoy their new free time and the ability to pursue other activities since they do not have the pressures of training (Shaffer, 1991). Stambulova, Stephan, and Japhag (2007) found athletes who had a planned sport retirement had a higher satisfaction rate in their career.

The more common reasons for sport retirement are burnout, age, injury, and de-selection whether voluntary or involuntary. To help understand the commitment that an athlete may have to his/her sport, several theories have been explored. These theories include: disengagement theory, activity theory, social learning theory, social cognitive theory, continuity theory, social breakdown theory/labeling theory, thantological theory, identity crisis theory, and subculture theory (Atchley, 1980; Bedny & Karwowski, 2005; Bem, 1972; Delaney and Madigan, 2009; Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008; Kuypers & Bengston, 1973; Schell, 1995; Tate, 1993). Each of these theories were explored and described in this study.

### **Voluntary versus Involuntary Retirement**

Retirement has two forms: voluntary and involuntary. The type of retirement has a large influence on how well an athlete responds to his/her retirement (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) stated that voluntary and involuntary retirement may not always be clear or separate because the diversity and the nature of the potential factors related to career termination, such as injury and deselection, can be considered a negative cause factor. With a voluntary retirement, many athletes will have a positive transition and adjust better in their new lives



(Baillie & Danish, 1992; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Tate, 1993). Voluntary retirement can either be chosen by the athlete or occurs when a pre-determined eligibility is reached. Those who voluntarily retired early reported that even though they may have had conflicts with their coach, they had decided that their sport was becoming time demanding, or they had suffered too many pressures - they may have had an easy retirement (Tate, 1993). Those athletes who have alternative areas of interest are better able to have a positive transition (Stankovich, 1998). According to Schell (1995), involuntary retirement is a forced departure from a sport. With an involuntary retirement, the athlete is less prepared, and therefore may experience a negative transition (Tate, 1993; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Wheeler, Malone, Van Viack, Nelson, & Steadward, 1996). This type of transition is usually traumatic or stressful to the devoted athlete. Many athletes who experience an involuntary retirement suffer from an identity crisis, or loss of their comfortable athletic identity, yet those who retired voluntarily appeared less likely to suffer from an identity crisis (DiCamilli, 2000; Wolff & Lester, 1989).

The type of retirement, voluntary or involuntary, has an impact on whether or not the athlete has a positive or negative retirement transition. Athletes who are forced into sport retirement typically have a difficult transition into this new period of their lives (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Fernandez, Stephan, Fouquereau, 2006; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Athletes forced into sport retirement are more likely to use defense strategies instead of actively seeking social support (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Those who voluntarily retire are more likely to actively seek help throughout the athletic retirement process (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Influences on sport retirement can be described as push and pull factors (Reitzes, Mutran, & Fernandez, 1998; Morton & Weckerle, 1998). Pull factors are described as being positive considerations for athletic retirement, including a desire to pursue leisure activities and

activities that are attractive to the athlete outside of his/her competitive sport (Reitzes, Mutran, & Fernandez; Morton & Weckerle, 1998). Push factors are known as being negative considerations into sport retirement, such as poor health and a dislike for the competitive sport (Reitzes, Mutran, & Fernandez; Morton & Weckerle, 1998). The push and pull factors are able to help identify athletes who may experience a more challenging transition into sport retirement.

## **Transition**

Transition can be defined as an obvious change in one's life or career (Stankovich, 1998). It is also defined as the events that lead to an athlete's change in behavior and outlook (Schell, 1995). A career transition can be described as a process of coping with a set of specific demands or challenges an athlete must face when entering athletic retirement (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Transitions from the sport world can either be positive or negative depending on the personality of the athlete and the reason(s) for retirement. Transition into the sport retirement world is not easily done for some athletes, because each reacts to the transition in his/her own way. Some athletes experience a smooth and positive transition, while others experience a negative transition. Miller (1997) suggested that almost two-thirds of retiring athletes experience problems with the transition process in athletic retirement. Providing support during the athletic career termination process may ease the transition. The transition process of sport retirement is individually based and affects athletes in different ways.

During the transition, the athlete struggles to develop a new identity to fit his/her lifestyle (Denison, 1994). Many athletes are not prepared for the transition into retirement because they cannot control many of the factors such as age, injury, or being cut from the team that lead to retirement (Stankovich, 1998). Athletes who may be forced into early sport retirement may not

be psychologically prepared to adjust to life outside of their competitive sport. Because of this, some athletes may struggle to find enjoyment outside of their respective sport (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). This lack of satisfaction in life has led sport retirement to be viewed as a life transition similar to the retirement from one's career (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). Athletes may struggle when they transition into the work force, because they may lack useable skills and the confidence to perform work tasks proficiently.

When athletic retirement occurs, the athlete transitions from who he/she is at that moment to who he/she is going to be in the future (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). The athlete then may seek coping mechanisms to help with this transition. Success in athletic retirement greatly depends on the resources available and the trials that the athletes face (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Some trials that retiring athletes may face include interpersonal conflicts, lack of necessary knowledge, lack of job skills, and difficulties in combining sport and studies in school (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Coping strategies factor in as an important aspect of the athletic retirement process (Alfermann, 2000; Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte, 2004; Grove, Lavalley, & Gordon, 1997; Lavelley & Wylleman, 2000). Athletes use a combination of coping strategies in order to have a smooth transition into the career world. Common coping mechanisms that athletes use include self-knowledge, skills, personality traits, motivation, and availability of social and financial support (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). A positive or successful transition into sport retirement occurs when the athlete is able to use his/her coping mechanisms to overcome many of the barriers.

The athlete who is most likely to suffer a negative transition are the ones who have a strong ego commitment to their sport (Tate, 1993). The longer an athlete has participated in a specific sport, the more difficult the transition an athlete will face (Tate, 1993). The athlete who

suffers a negative transition into retirement often becomes depressed (Denison, 1994). With this condition, the athlete may be unable to awaken from sleep easily or may be unwilling to socialize with people. The athlete who experiences a negative transition may begin to drink, smoke, stop exercising, and disassociate from his/her usual realm of friends (DiCamilli, 2000; Thornton, 1990). Athletic retirement can bring an anxiety to the athlete of being “forgotten” leading the individual to not wanting to leave his/her athletic life (Torregrosa, Boixados, & Cruz, 2004). An athlete who is able to control his/her athletic termination is more able to experience a positive transition for they are able to prepare for the changes that arise (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). The athlete who is forced into sport retirement may not have time to consider or plan for the life changes that will occur. The transition into life after sport competition should be planned so that the transition is smooth and rewarding (Headrick, 1998). Miller (1997) found the athlete who adjusted best to career sport termination are those who planned for the process.

Not every athlete experiences a negative transition; some athletes make a smooth and happy transition. Many of the athletes who did not experience a difficult transition were prepared for retirement (Fender, 1988). The athletes who experience a positive transition tend to find new hobbies or interests (Denison, 1994). An athlete experiences a smooth transition when he/she has other important interests in his/her life (Shaffer, 1991). A smooth transition into retirement is made if the athlete enjoys the reprieve from the demands both physical and emotional of his/her sport (Schell, 1995). Positive and negative transitions are determined by the athlete’s focus, sense of athletic accomplishments, relationships with the coach, injury history, and amount of support from family and friends (Tate, 1993). Torregrosa, Boixados, and Cruz (2004) found that team sports lead to a more gradual and planned career transition.

Schlossberg (1984) suggests that a successful transition for an athlete into sport retirement depends on transition characteristics, institutional support, intrapersonal support, and the transition environment. Many collegiate athletes compete while on an athletic scholarship, which assists them in obtaining an education. When athletic retirement occurs, this financial support ends. If the athlete finishes school, he/she will have an educational background in which to rely upon for financial support. Athletes who do not complete their degrees lack that financial support and therefore may suffer a negative transition into sport retirement because of this monetary worry. Some collegiate athletes worry about the lack of financial support during their collegiate years (Brown, 1983; Burton & Martens, 1986; Koukouris, 1991; Mihovilovic, 1968, Tamasne, 1976). Collegiate athletes stress about not having enough money to pay for books, clothes, or entertainment and also about settling into a successful future job (Brown, 1983; Burton & Martens, 1986; Koukouris, 1991; Mihovilovic; 1968; Tamasne, 1976). Many collegiate athletes do try to focus on the future and have more concerns than just their competitive sport. Koukouris (1991) found some of their respondents felt the costs such as time, energy, and money to participate in a collegiate sport did not always out-weigh the potential rewards – recognition and self-affirmation. The age period between 18 and 23, which is the average competitive age of collegiate athletes is considered a developmental stage for the person and can be affected by not being able to be in a formal job setting (Koukouris, 1991; Rosenberg, 1980). A formal job setting and training for a sport are not the same. This condition may contribute to negative transitions for the athletes since jobs are needed by most after competitive athletics in order to support themselves in life after sport. Collegiate athletes may need more guidance into job training upon sport retirement to facilitate in a positive transition.

When the sport retirement process occurs, the athlete begins a new transition process into a new life phase. Many athletes make the transition from competitive sport to working life smoothly with little negative effects (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). These athletes have typically prepared for sport retirement, obtained an education, and developed working life skills. Their family and friends also provided support. McPherson (1980) concluded that while many athletes experienced a smooth transition into sport retirement, they generally do not find this new career rewarding, either psychologically or financially. The stresses associated with retirement are generally negative and produce anxiety (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). For non-athletes, retirement usually occurs late in one's life when one can plan for the life transition but for athletes, this process can occur at an unplanned time. Because of the time demands associated with sport, athletes may not have sufficiently prepared for this new life phase.

### **Transition Model**

The effectiveness of coping with the transition process can depend on the available transition resources and the barriers hindering the help (Kadlick & Flemr, 2008). Too many barriers may cause a crisis or stressful transition (Kadlick & Flemr, 2008). Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) developed a five step method to explain the adaptation process that occurs with athletic career termination. These steps include: identifying the causal factors that initiated the retirement process, noting any factors related to the adaptation, describing the available resources that can affect the response, noting the quality of the adaptation process, and discussing the treatment options available for any stressful reactions (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). These transition models established sport retirement as a transition process that should have pre-conditions or demands, coping strategies, and outcomes established prior to athletic retirement.

## **Athletic Identity**

Athletic identity can be described as the degree to which a person identifies with his/her athletic role (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). A person's identity includes the aspects of one's life that he/she deems necessary to develop character (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). Athletic identity is enhanced by the fact that the competitor is viewed more publically than some employees in careers (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1988). Sport can provide many people a means to improving their self-esteem (Wheeler, Malone, Van Viack, Nelson, & Steadward, 1996). At the time an athlete is entering sport retirement, his/her athletic identity will have an effect on the transition (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Each person differs in how he/she views his/her identity.

A high or strong athletic identity can lead to a negative transition into sport retirement (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). This negative transition occurs when the athlete is unable to form a new social role in society and disengage from the competitive sport as an athlete. Athletes who may be forced into early sport retirement may not be psychologically prepared to adjust to life outside of their competitive sport (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1988). When an athlete retires from his/her sport, he/she may feel like his/her identity and support system is lost. Also, an athlete may feel that his/her family may not accept him/her either, since family tends to be a great supporter of athletic participation. Reactions to sport retirement differ among athletes, due to the varying degrees of athletic identity. An athletic identity is different than a self-identity for it limits the person to only associating himself/herself with a sport more than to other aspects in life.

Athletes who have a strong athletic identity with their sports and who have a difficult time viewing themselves outside of athletics seem to experience a harder separation at the sport

retirement period (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1988). An athlete who possesses an athletic identity and a self-identity separate from his/her sport seem to transition more smoothly out of the competition realm (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1988). Stambulova, Stephan, and Japhag (2007) found that one-third of their respondents reported having difficulties in changing their identities from athletic-oriented to career-oriented. Athletic identity may be so deeply rooted that it may threaten a competitor's sense of control. The longer the athlete reported staying in a sport career, the more of a difficult retirement process was reported (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Webb, Nasco, Riley, and Headrick found that some athletes felt they needed to be part of a sport in order to be known on the college campus. When an athlete retires, he/she may experience feelings of loss of meaning or purpose in life (Nimrod, 2007). Some athletes may think that they will be unknown if they are not associated with a specific sport.

Lally (2007) defined self-identity as a multi-dimensional view of oneself, which is influenced by social and environmental factors. Even though a person's identity is composed of several dimensions, one area of interest may dominate to skew the overall self-identity (Lally, 2007). This can happen within athletics when an individual views himself/herself more of an athlete than any other area of interest. Through sport, a person develops close bonds with his/her teammates to the point that a person with a strong athletic identity would not feel alienated (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). An athlete with a high athletic identity may participate in a phenomenon call "basking in reflected glory" where the athlete has a tendency to wear and associate with his/her team all the time (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976, p. 77; Delaney & Madigan, 2009). This identity narrowing can lead to the formation of an athletic identity.



In the career realm, the athlete is not known or has lost his/her self-identity (Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001; Wolff & Lester, 1989). Athletic identity is important to an athlete. Adler and Adler (1989) found that men's basketball players glorified themselves as only possessing an athletic status when they were introduced to the members of the professional sport. The majority of the players described themselves as only playing basketball in the future with no mention of an academic career (Adler & Adler, 1989). Their overall identity diminished including in the social realm (Adler & Adler, 1989). Females are not exempt from this identity crisis either, since after athletics they too must form a new self-identity.

Once an athlete retires, he/she must form a new self-identity and re-establish himself/herself in a new world (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). Brown (1993) found that athletes who pursued sport careers scored lower in the areas of career maturity, career decision making, world-of-work information, and knowledge of a preferred occupational group. Blann (1985) reported that student athletes at a high level of competition, such as a Division I school, were less likely to formulate mature educational and career plans than the general students from that same school. This study revealed how dedicated some athletes are to their sport and do not consider future plans without that sport. Myslenski (1986) reported that many athletes are taught that their self-worth is associated with sport performance, which can hinder the transition into life without athletics (Stier, 2007). These athletes experience a negative transition during sport retirement since no planning or guidance for the future was provided (Blann, 1985). These athletes also have a strong athletic identity, making it more difficult for them to consider a future without competitive athletics (Blann, 1985).

Sport retirement may be difficult if the athlete has a strong athletic identity (Grove, Lavalley, & Gordon, 1997; Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). Athletes who devote their

entire life to sport without any outside interests may experience a more difficult time adjusting to life without their sport (McPherson, 1980; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The athlete has a hard time viewing himself/herself outside the sporting realm leading to an identity crisis post athletic retirement (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Therefore, the athlete with the strong athletic identity usually does not plan for the future without sport competition, making it more difficult to leave the sporting environment (McPherson, 1980). An athlete may develop a low self-identity when forced to retire and leave his/her athletic identity (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The transition process for athletic retirement can be prolonged if the athlete is unable to disassociate from his/her current athletic identity (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Grove, Lavalley, and Gordon (1997) found that retiring athletes with a strong sport identity had behavioral disengagement, negative outbursts, and warranted more outside social support than the athletes with a low athletic identity. Wheeler, Malone, Van Viack, Nelson, and Steadward (1996) reported that an athlete suffered self-identity issues that lasted a year post-sport retirement. A strong athletic identity may lead to a more difficult transition.

If clarity exists for the athlete regarding his/her self identity, athletic retirement may be an easier transition. The athlete may begin to find satisfying activities in life without the sport competition. Sport retirement can be a difficult period in a collegiate athlete's life since it may leave the person feeling vague about his/her future. Sport career termination may introduce dramatic changes into the life of the athlete, which can affect him/her emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally. During competitive years, the athlete acquires a known social status and strong athletic identity (Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). When an athlete has these suddenly taken away, or is not prepared for them to be removed from his/her life, a negative transition may occur. The athlete may consider having to change his/her identity to meet the changing

demands of his/her life as a negative event (Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). This change is inevitable, because the athlete must give up the competition side of his/her sport at some point in life.

### **Self-Efficacy**

A person's self-efficacy is his/her belief to be able to perform actions necessary to learning a behavior (Schunk, 2008). One's self-efficacy influences his/her learned behavior (Schunk, 2008). A person's self-efficacy relative to his/her identity can influence that person's learning of new skills. Individuals who exhibit a low self-efficacy toward the learning of a new skill are more likely to give up on that skill instead of attempting to master the task (Schunk, 2008). The individual may have a high self-efficacy in another life area, such as a sport, and therefore may be less willing to transition away from that task. This can make athletic retirement difficult if the athlete is unwilling to pursue new skills that he/she is not automatically good at performing.

One's self-efficacy is related to task career choices in life (Schunk, 2008). It is also related to the effort one gives toward an activity or task (Schunk, 2008). Self-doubt can affect a person's self-efficacy by making that individual not want to continue the task (Schunk, 2008). If life without competitive athletics appears scary to an athlete and doubt about succeeding in the future occurs, then a negative sport retirement is likely. Peer modeling can strengthen one's self-efficacy toward a skill or task (Schunk, 2008). The athlete can receive from a peer, the support he/she craves for attempting a skill.

Feedback can enhance a person's self-efficacy toward a skill (Schunk, 2008). In athletics, an athlete receives the feedback he/she desires for a better performance. In the career realm,

without competitive athletics, the individual may not always receive the feedback he/she desires, thus making the transition into sport retirement negative.

### **Social Role**

With sport retirement, a new social role is formed by the athlete. The athlete experiences a loss of teammates, coaching staff, and the security of his/her sport competition. The athlete must form a new social role outside of his/her sport. One possible reason athletes do not try to form a new social role is because they feel isolated from their former sports and teammates, so they form antisocial attitudes (Wolff & Lester, 1989). Along with forming a new social role comes the psychological, interpersonal, and financial adjustments that must be made by the athlete, for everything is changing in his/her world by leaving the sporting realm behind (Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001; Lavalley & Anderson, 2000). Grove, Lavalley, Gordon, and Harvey (1998) studied 2000 retiring athletes and found that twenty percent of them experienced “psychological adjustment difficulties.” Adjustments into this new world are affected by sport retirement reasons, a positive or negative transition, and the coping mechanisms used during that transition period (Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001). Organized sports provide a socializing network for its participants where they are able to learn and develop many life skills (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). The team members prove a strong support system for each other. When an athlete transitions into sport retirement, this support system may diminish, causing stress in the athlete’s life and resulting in a negative sport retirement.

Many athletes do not plan for the future outside of competitive athletics (Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001). The more support and direction an athlete has, the better the

transition into the real world can be. Social withdrawal is not uncommon when retiring due to an injury (Lewis-Griffith, 1982). Pearlman (2004) stated that a social arrest occurs with retirement from competitive sport, where it may take four to seven years to fully adjust to the differences. Webb, Nasco, Riley, and Headrick (1998) found that those retiring due to an injury had the most difficult time adjusting when compared to the athletes who had some control over or expected retirement.

An athlete's social significance in his/her sport may be enhanced due to the increase in media attention. Athletes who strive for the media coverage as a method of satisfaction are known as 'media-athletes' (Torregrosa, Boixados, & Cruz, 2004). Being a media-athlete, can lead to problems with career termination, because the athlete may no longer receive the attention he/she has come to rely upon for self-satisfaction. Athletic retirement can lead to adjustment problems in an athlete's transition into life without competitive sport (Torregrosa, Boixados, & Cruz, 2004). Some athletes who have a high competitive level may view athletics as a means to an upward social mobility and social development (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Some athletes may not want to retire for fear of losing recognition (Wheeler, Malone, Van Viack, Nelson, & Steadward, 1996). The athlete may enjoy the feeling of being recognized in the community and not want to lose that feeling (Wheeler, Malone, Van Viack, Nelson, & Steadward, 1996). Media attention can have an impact on the success of an athlete's transition process into sport career termination.

Many athletes begin competing in their sport at a young age and have no thoughts of retiring. The main objective at that time was to become a great known athlete pleasing the crowds. Sometimes when athletic retirement enters an athlete's life, he/she is not prepared to leave the competitive lifestyle. Not being prepared may lead to a negative transition in this life

process, which can have long-lasting effects. A positive transition may be described as developing a new self-identity, new social relationships, and new social roles in his/her life to achieve self-satisfaction (Chen, 2003). A negative transition therefore could be described as an individual not leaving the social relationships and not having a good impact on society outside of athletics (Chen, 2003). Torregrosa, Boixados, and Cruz (2004) found that male athletes realized that athletic retirement was inevitable, but were unsure of when and how it would occur. This uncertainty can lead to a lack of preparedness, resulting in a negative outlook to sport retirement.

### **Re-socialization**

Challenges that a retiring athlete may face can include: graduation, seeking a new job, marriage, moving into a new geographical location, parenthood, new job, and new friends. Upon retirement from a sport, the athlete may experience a re-socialization process or a social reintegration into a new social setting. The collegiate athlete develops a new societal role outside of competitive athletics upon athletic retirement. Tamasne (1976) and Kleiber and Greendorter (1983) suggested that the end of a college athlete's career can cause adjustment problems when moving into a new societal role.

Participating in competitive sport may provide a socio-emotional function for the athlete. The athlete can gain experience with conflict and tension management that may build team unity (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). Some athletes experience social mobility and improve their socio-economic status through competitive sport retirement, which can make their life easier to them (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). During sport retirement, the athlete may feel that status disappears, and he/she is unable to cope with that loss. While this status change may not always alter the

athlete's current social status, the athlete usually does not want to experience social status regression that may come from sport retirement.

### **Body Image**

Besides his/her identity, the athlete may also experience bodily changes with sport career termination. These body changes such as weight gain, loss of muscular strength, and bodily pain, can be a source of distress for the retiring athlete (Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). With a new social role in society there may develop a new fitness role, which may not be as intense as the individual had prior to retirement. A large discrepancy of body image exists between exercising to maintain a healthy lifestyle and training for a competitive sport (Chamalidis, 2000; Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). The bodily worries and changes occurring may become a great stressor for the athlete during the sport career termination period (Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). When an athlete's body image becomes altered in a negative manner according to the individual, he/she may experience a "suffering body," which is weight gain, degradation of physical competencies, body tension, pain, and tiredness (Stephan & Bilard, 2003; Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). These conditions can be the products of a drastic reduction of physical training and deregulation of one's eating habits (Stephan & Bilard, 2003; Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007; Wyllemann, DeKnop, Menkehorst, Theeboom, and Annerel, 1993). Athletes who possess positive body images have a tendency to experience from exercise a higher self-esteem (Fox, 2000). Negative bodily experiences stem from weight gain and being unable to maintain personal physical competencies (Fox, 2000). Stephan, Torregrosa, and Sanchez (2007) found that athletes who reported having negative feelings about their bodily changes experienced negative athletic retirements, which can decrease their perception of their

physical self-worth. How an athlete views or accepts the bodily changes that occur in sport and athletic retirement, can influence the ease of the transition into sport career termination.

### **Feelings of Loss**

Athletic retirement may bring a feeling of loss where the athlete believes he/she will not be able to replace the feeling that his/her sport provided (Brady, 1988). When retirement is forced upon an athlete, such as from injury or deselection, the person may feel as if he/she has few choices in his/her life (Brady, 1988). This may also elicit feelings of an empty promise that all his/her hard work and time was meaningless (Brady, 1988). Sport retirement requires a psychological adjustment and role withdrawal (Greendorfer, 1985). During this event, the retiring athlete may reprioritize his/her interests and activities (Greendorfer, 1985). By reorganizing his/her interests in life, the retiring athlete may not have the feelings of loss for long. Hill and Lowe (1994) concluded that the retirement process may be the first time an athlete feels deprived of the satisfaction from the sport. Sport retirement can be a source of anxiety because of the fear of losing companionship and a social system (Thomas & Ermler, 1988).

### **Examples of Sport Retirement**

Personal testimonies and observation of already retired athletes can focus on a problem at large with sport retirement and the need for an intervention. A personal report from a retired professional tennis player stated that when she talked about her feelings and doubts it helped her through the transition period into sport retirement and to establish a new social role (Wolff & Lester, 1989). She stated that in the beginning of her transition she did not cope well and was experiencing a difficult transition, but when she began talking about her fears and uncertainties,



she began experiencing a positive transition into sport retirement (Wolff & Lester, 1989). She began to realize that she had options and a life after her professional tennis career. Another example of a positive transition is Senator Bill Bradley's post-retirement from a professional basketball team (Wolff & Lester, 1989). He was able to give back to society after retiring from his sport in a positive manner. Not all transitions end in a positive manner, though. When Larry Mickey who was considered an average player in the National Hockey League retired, he struggled with life outside of his sport before committing suicide (Wolff & Lester, 1989). He was never able to establish a life outside of his sport and had no support or guidance to help him through this transition period in his life. Suicide is an extreme example of a negative sport retirement and may be avoided with a prepared transition.

Examples of negative sport retirement are easy to observe since the media spotlights these stories. Athletes who experienced a successful sport retirement usually stayed out of the media spotlight. An example of a negative transition includes Darryl Strawberry, a professional baseball player, who after leaving his sport began using illegal drugs (Pearlman, 2004). A former Houston Astros player was found living under a bridge upon his retirement from his athletic career (Pearlman, 2004). Elaina Oden was an Olympic Volleyball player who chose steroid injections to prolong her playing career another season. After her forced retirement, due to a knee injury, she moved from one assistant coaching job to another, stating that she was unsatisfied with anything but playing (Pearlman, 2004). Oden decided to return to college for another degree in order to begin a new life for herself, and she states that the transition from athlete to business woman was not easy (Pearlman, 2004).

Rebecca Lobo a professional women's basketball player made a more positive transition into sport retirement since she never considered herself only an athlete, but an athlete and career

woman (Pearlman, 2004). She transitioned into a sports reporting career instead of attempting to prolong a career that she states was over (Pearlman, 2004). If professional athletes experience difficulty with sport retirement, then college athletes may also have similar situations as well. Competitive athletics could be viewed as a gateway into another opportunity in one's life.

### **Family and Friends**

Family can be a source of emotional support for an athlete (Brady, 1988). When an athlete transitions away from his/her sport, this can be a source of stress for the person. If the retirement is forced, the athlete may feel as though he/she has failed his/her family. The family may be a source of stress because they do not understand what the athlete is feeling or experiencing. They may feel that the athlete can continue to participate or may also feel the loss of the activity. If the family regularly attended competitions, they may also feel a loss of activity or disruption of a routine.

Friends as a support system may help ease the transition into athletic retirement. Most friends occur because of similar likes, activities, and interests (Brady, 1988). When an individual transitions into athletic retirement, less similarities between the individuals may exist and a friendship can become strained. Some athletes may not continue previous relationships because of seeing what they are missing (Brady, 1988). A retiring athlete may feel a loss of team friendships upon retiring because the team members who are still competing continue to have similarities that the retiree cannot relate to anymore (Daniel, 2002). Not all friendships can sustain a major life transition. Werther and Orlick (1982) suggested that sport retirement is not viewed as an end but as a loss of a relationship. The relationship involves victories, sacrifices, self-improvement, coaches, and teammates (Werther & Orlick, 1982).

## **Assistance**

Typically, formal help or information is not available to current athletes regarding their transition process into sport retirement. Kadlick and Flemr (2008) found that retired athletes stated that they sought friends, coaches, and life partners for help in transitioning into athletic career termination. Kadlick and Flemr (2008) also found that athletes who planned for their retirement were inconsistent in the amount of time or thought given to the event. When asked to describe any social support that they received during the sport retirement process, the athletes answered that it was social networks which included parents, life-partners, and friends. Common coping strategies included keeping in touch with the sport, taking up a new physical activity, stress management, and seeking social support. Sport retirement does not have a single cause so pre-retirement planning may have an effect on the transition outcome for the athlete (Kadlick & Flemr, 2008). Pre-retirement planning can mean that an athlete who enters the sport retirement process can have a positive outcome.

Counseling can enable an athlete to experience a positive transition into sport retirement. Counseling can give the athlete direction into his/her future and the career choice for him/her and what he/she wishes to accomplish in life (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). This allows the athlete to have a sense of self-worth outside of his/her sport. Counseling or directed guidance can provide an athlete with the closure he/she needs to experience a successful transition out of his/her competitive sport (Shmerler, 2002). This may help the athlete discover a new passion or interest to pursue in other areas instead of competitive athletics (Shmerler, 2002). Counseling can be considered a coping strategy for helping retiring athletes. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) found two coping strategies used to ease an athlete into sport retirement. The first is the "Career Jump Program" (CAPA), which is from the U.S. Olympic Committee in 1980 where athletes from the

Olympic or Pan-American Games could attend workshops. These workshops focused on providing support to the athlete and easing his/her concerns about sport retirement. Support systems (following the format of these workshops) have recently been developed with other athletes and coaches with much success. The second coping mechanism is the “Making the Jump Program” (MJP). This program, which provided seminars for athletes to attend and discuss future plans after sport, was developed by the Advisory Resource Center for Athletics at Springfield College in Massachusetts. These programs were provided in conjunction with counseling by professionals who knew the experiences of an athlete (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The counselors in these situations focused on career planning and personal development.

Other educational programs have been developed to help ease the transition into sport retirement. Australia and the United Kingdom have developed national career and educational programs to help athletes transition into sport retirement (Torregrosa, Boixados, & Cruz, 2004). Danish and D’Augelli (1983) developed the Life Development Program for intercollegiate athletes, which is a six-stage program that focuses on athletic retirement. Janis and Mann’s (1977) conflict theory of decision making addresses decisional problems, which people who are highly committed to something, such as a sport may face. These counseling techniques promote proactive decision making outside of the commitment area (Janis & Mann, 1977). A career assistance program was developed from a grant to help collegiate student-athletes transition into sport retirement and develop a new career (Petitpas, Danish, McKelvain, & Murphy, 1992). Through this program many athletes indicated they had no skills except those related to their sport. These researchers also found that during the sport retirement process, athletes felt misunderstood and alone. The athletes surveyed revealed that they possessed no self-image

without their sport. The same researchers found that athletes were upset with their institutions for not better preparing them for life without athletics.

Sport psychologists have also aided in counseling athletes about sport retirement in order to address the athlete's concerns about his or her future without sport competition (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). Remer, Tongate, and Watson (1978) facilitated success in sport retirement by counseling athletes through discussing their future career plans to ease their fears. Counseling provides support and direction for the athlete in knowing what he/she wants to do after retirement and helps to build bridges into new areas of life (Baillie, 1993; Grove, Lavalley, Gordon, & Harvey, 1998; Shmerler, 2002). In a study by Drawer and Fuller (2002), satisfaction was found by providing counseling support for the athletes that were forced into sport retirement due to injury. Focusing on issues the athlete may be concerned about or afraid of will help him/her with the transition into sport retirement. Few competitive leagues offer career guidance or support for the retiring athlete (Pearlman, 2004). Pearlman interviewed professional athletes who stated that the colleges and universities they came from did not prepare them for life after competition and felt the institutions only cared about the product or winning.

Some countries provide support for athletes approaching sport career termination. In France, the elite athletes are encouraged to combine their sport with a professional career (Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000; Stambulova, Stephan, Japhag, 2007). This is done because not many athletes will earn enough financially through their sports to support their living needs, so the athletes are prepared for life without competitive athletics. In Sweden, education is highly stressed among the athletes, so they may be hired for high paying positions post sport retirement (Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000; Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Social, emotional, and financial support to athletes prior to sport retirement may help the transition process (Stephan,

Bilard, Ninot, & Delignieres, 2003). Stambulova, Stephan, and Japhag found that sport retirement planning is associated with a positive transition and with achieving a higher life satisfaction for the athlete. Therefore, planning assistance should be offered to all athletes prior to sport career termination.

Since sport retirement is considered to be a type of death by some athletes, it could be suggested that the athlete's emotions follow Kubler-Ross's stages of dying (Wolff & Lester, 1989). Kubler-Ross (1969) suggested that one's reaction to death occurs in five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. In order to overcome the death emotions, the athlete must experience all of these emotions in their particular order to recover. Due to the emotions that the athletes experience, counseling may be beneficial as a coping mechanism. With counseling, or some type of intervention, retiring athletes are able to understand their emotions and deal with their uncertainties about the future (Baillie, 1993; Werther & Orlick, 1982; Wolff & Lester, 1989). Athletes may experience a type of death when proceeding through the athletic retirement process, due to the loss of spectator support. The athlete may rely on this support for performance success. The athlete may also feel that this support will continue to be with him/her even after he/she leaves the sport. Unfortunately, this spectator support does not always remain with the athlete in the retirement process. Daniel (2002) revealed that the public tends to not have sympathy for former athletes, believing that they should be set for life because of the skills they gained in competition.

In adapting to sport retirement, an athlete may use coping strategies, social support, or pre-retirement planning (Fisher & Wrisberg, 2007). Coping strategies include maintaining a regular workout schedule, speaking to supportive people, or visiting athletic friends (Fisher & Wrisbeg, 2007). Pre-retirement planning is not widely available to athletes of all levels since it is

a relatively new topic. This planning could have a great influence since all athletes experience this event (Fisher & Wrisberg, 2007). Fisher and Wrisberg stated that athletes who talk with a consultant prior to sport retirement are more likely to find alternative career options. An athlete who feels he/she is in control of his/her sport retirement process has a smoother transition (Fisher & Wrisberg, 2007). An athlete who has a negative transition, commonly turns to drugs and alcohol when the distress of establishing a new life becomes overwhelming to the individual (Fisher & Wrisberg, 2007). The athletic retirement process can be eased for the athlete by having personal and institutional support or help (Fisher & Wrisberg, 2007). Pre-retirement support could be a source of aid for an athlete, so a positive sport career termination process can be achieved.

According to these previous findings, counseling or guidance programs may be beneficial to a retiring athlete, especially since some athletes consider sport retirement a type of death. Sport retirement counseling could be warranted to help reduce the uncertainties an athlete may have about beginning a life outside of athletic competition (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006). Wylleman et al. (1993) found that by forming a career path before sport retirement eases the transition, because it gives the athlete a formulated goal. Baillie (1992) found that of 260 retired elite and professional athletes, half of the athletes who reported planning for sport retirement experienced a positive transition. Effective interventions for a retiring athlete can lead to a successful transition into the career world (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000; Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Failure to adjust to sport career termination can lead to overtraining, neuroses, psycho-somatic illness, alcohol or drug usage, criminal activity, or injuries (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Stambulova, Stephan, and Japhag found that athletes

were not concerned about the source of support, such as coaches, sport officials, and psychologists that they received during the athlete retirement process.

Prior to athletic retirement, the athlete should consider the decision about his/her medical, financial, educational, and career matters, since these are the topics that typically occur at retirement (Drawer & Fuller, 2002). By preparing current athletes to consider these matters, they could experience a smooth transition out of their respective competitive sport. Counseling professionals, who are knowledgeable and sensitive to the demands of athletes, may be beneficial to the athletic retirement process (Chartrand & Lent, 1987). While this seems to be an easy service to supply, many colleges and universities either cannot afford such a professional or do not see the need for the services (Chartrand & Lent, 1987).

### **Educational Institutions**

Athletic institutions become a large part of an athlete's life due to the time commitments and social growth he/she develops while competing in athletics for that institution. Some athletic programs do so much for the athlete that he/she is not capable of handling the stresses of the working world (Daniel, 2002). Athletes who devote their time at an educational institution, concentrating only on athletic performance, or who have much athletic talent, may not gain real-life skills that are necessary post-athletic competition. This athlete may experience a world of privilege where he/she only concentrates on sport performance (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Because of this, the athlete's self-worth and self-esteem are directly related to sport performance (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Education in these cases is not valued even though the institution is responsible for developing of critical thinkers, informed decision makers, ability to understand oneself, and to understand the world (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). The athlete may not be taking



full advantage of the opportunities at the educational institution but instead is only concentrating on athletic performance.

Institutions offering competitive sports attract learners for an exchange relationship. A student is recognized for his/her athletic talents and in exchange for performing at that school: the student gains an education. Social and financial gains are made by each party (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). The athletic establishment gains recognition for having a gifted athlete while the athlete gains a social network (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Financially, some athletes have his/her schooling paid for while the institution sells tickets for spectators to see the athletic teams compete (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). The athlete may be viewed as a hero at the institution for his/her athletic accomplishments. With this status, people associated with the institution may begin to provide care for the athlete to the extreme (e.g. others may do school work for the athlete) (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). So much care may be given to the athlete that he/she is hindered from learning real-life skills.

A pampered life in college athletics may leave an athlete without the necessary skills to cope with life stresses (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). In the past, predominately male athletes have been the source of the pampering in college athletics although females are now experiencing similar treatment (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). An athlete depends greatly on the academic institution for his/her learning in all areas of life. The coach and other institution personnel are traditionally centered in an athlete's life, and he/she relies on them for knowledge and control of life situations (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). These people take care of most of the daily life decisions for the athlete during his/her time of eligibility at the academic institution (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Even with the extensive organizational personnel surrounding the athlete, which may include coaches, teammates, medical staff, academic advisors, teachers, and agents, no

formalized support structure for sport career termination has been established at all educational institutions comply (Stier, 2007). An athlete may not seek individualized consultation because he/she may not realize it is available.

Athletics can provide a means of stability in one's life that can become disrupted when sport retirement occurs. Athletic programs and educational institutions are similar in that each promotes the teaching of life lessons, leadership, and decision-making skills. Powerful influences help form an individual's values, choices, and decisions. By these means of obligation, an institution can facilitate the transition from sport to real-life (Thomas & Ermler, 1988).

Social and financial standing in an athlete's home community may serve as an advantage for the athlete. An athlete with a high socio-education status is more likely to have a positive sport retirement process (Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2002).

Leaving an athletic world that one has been accustomed to for years can be a source of stress with the expectation of learning new skills and establishing new social roles. For this, critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, social interaction, and self-understanding skills are essential. These skills are commonly learned while at college institutions (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Athletes devote so much of their life to their sports that they may not fully develop these skills in their college experience (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). The educational institution may provide a false sense of security of always being there for the athlete's well being (Stephan, Bilard, Ninot, & Delignieres, 2003; Thomas & Ermler, 1988). The athletic program promotes happiness of the athlete at selected times when morally it should be for all situations (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Morally, the athletic program should help teach the essential skills for an athlete to transition into the real world for him/her to become a successful and contributing member of society.

## **Moral Obligations of Institutions**

Thomas and Ermler (1988) suggested that an institution has a moral obligation to help the athlete attain life skills due to the power they possess. These authors stated that an obligation of the institution is to provide retirement benefits at the beginning of the training phase and at all levels or years of participation. Using the utilitarian argument, and due to the assumptions of a power relationship between the institution and the athlete, an athletic institution has a moral obligation to provide support for the athlete during the sport retirement transition process. The power source in this situation is defined as one within a social relationship where one is in a position to carry out his/her will despite resistance (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). In cases regarding sport, the institution personnel contain the power or acts as the decision maker for the athlete.

The coaches and institution personnel may owe the athlete since the end or program success was achieved by the athlete's sacrifices and performances. Athletics has been described as being ethical relativistic, where no universal or set moral standards exist, for even with a governing body such as the NCAA each institution interprets the guidelines differently (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). In this situation, the differences between right and wrong are not clear and become situational (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Some coaches tend to operate under the assumption of doing what is good for the athletic program and team, therefore not worrying about the well being of the athlete (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). This may not always include consideration of the individual athlete or his/her future.

Beneficence describes an obligation for one to help others further their important interests (Stephan, Bilard, Ninot, & Delignieres, 2003; Thomas & Ermler, 1988). It promotes a paternal

interest to aid in the happiness of others. It is justified for helping an individual who may be about to inflict harm upon himself/herself (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Emotional stress can elicit feelings of self-destruction. The use of coercion is justified if one is preventing a person from committing harm against himself/herself on the basis that if the athlete were mature, he/she would make the same decision (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). This can also occur when the coach may not have the time to wait for the athlete to reach the same decision as he/she would choose. Unfortunately, the coach is generally making decisions based on his/her values and may be considered for the good of the coach and not the athlete. This does not promote the learning or development of the athlete to make real-life decisions thus entitling help from the institution in the sport retirement process.

## **Reasons to Retire**

### **Burnout**

Burnout is one of the many reasons why an athlete may choose an early retirement. Burnout is a psychological, emotional, or physical withdrawal from an activity and can be considered a state of fatigue and exhaustion brought on by chronic stress (Flor, 1996; Raedeke, 1995). Burnout can be brought on by the combination of chronic stress and psychological exhaustion in a high-pressured environment (Flor, 1996). This can occur due to emotional exhaustion with prolonged exposure to one activity such as sport. A competitive emphasis over a long period of time can lead to burnout. Athletes typically prone to burnout may be those who, possess high initial motivations, expectations, and commitments, but later feel they cannot contribute adequately to their team or sport (Raedeke, 1995). When athletes feel that even with an increased training a decreased performance is observed, a burnout feeling may result, which

may produce a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Raedeke, 1995). The increase in training can be a sign of overtraining for his/her sport. The athlete is exposed to many stressors including lack of support from family, friends, or coaches and the high expectations these people placed on him/her, which can lead to burnout or athletic retirement (Raedeke, 1995). When the athlete is unable to reach his/her goals he/she may develop a negative attitude toward the sport (Raedeke, 1995). Even a performance slump that leads to feelings of frustration and disappointment can lead to athletic burnout (Raedeke, 1995). The slump may not last long, but it may just be enough for the athlete to choose retirement over competing. Burnout affects all sports for it is the combination of one's training and stress. Once burnout has occurred to an athlete, its effects are difficult to reverse, possibly leading to an athlete's sport retirement (Shaffer, 1991).

Due to the excessive social, physical, and psychological demands placed on the athletes, burnout has become more common (Shaffer, 1991; Wilmore, Costill, & Kenney, 2008). The most common characteristics of burnout are psychological, emotional, and physical withdrawal from the sport and team (Raedeke, 1995). A decreased commitment to one's sport can be observed to the point that he/she stops caring about his/her sport accomplishments (Raedeke, 1995). Emotional exhaustion is suffered by the athletes because of their continual stress of competing and training, which leads them to feel physically drained (Raedeke, 1995; Wilmore, Costill, & Kenney, 2008). Insufficient benefits or money, combined with frustrated expectations such as being unable to reach an ultimate goal, also may lead to athletic burnout (Raedeke, 1995). For some athletes, burnout can last from five to fourteen days while others endure a longer time span (Raedeke, 1995; Wilmore, Costill, & Kenney, 2008). Some athletes are able to

compete again after suffering from burnout by taking time off. Other reasons for sport retirement are not as easy for the athlete to come back from and compete again.

### **Cut From Team**

Another reason athletes are faced with an early retirement is due to deselection or being cut from the team. This is when the athlete is unable to participate at a higher level in his/her specific sport (Stankovich, 1998). Deselection brings on a feeling of having unfinished business and loss if the sport was their main identity, which brings a sadness derived from living in the same environment yet not being considered an athlete anymore (Stankovich, 1998). Many of the athletes who retire due to not making the team go through a transition period that resembles Kubler-Ross' stages of shock or surprise at being cut from the team and denial or not accepting that they were not selected (Stankovich, 1998). Some common side effects of being cut include a loss of appetite, weight fluctuations (especially weight gain), skipping menstrual cycles, and insomnia (Stankovich, 1998). The psychological effects associated with deselection are mood changes, sense of being out of control, sadness about the loss of teammates, decline in motivation, and a lack of trust in others (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006; Stankovich, 1998). This means the athlete retires sooner than he/she expected. Not being selected for an athletic team forces that athlete to assess his/her limited athletic ability, which may decrease that athlete's self-esteem and self-confidence (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). Deselection is not the only way an athlete may retire unexpectedly.

### **Injury**

An athlete experiences a difficult transition when forced to retire due to an injury. The negative transition may lead to depression, substance abuse, or even suicide attempts (Stankovich, 1998; Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). When retiring due to an injury, the athlete may cease associating with his/her former teammates, who are still competing (Denison, 1994). Injury, forcing the athlete into early and unplanned athletic retirement, may result in a social withdrawal, identity crisis, fear, anxiety, or a loss of self-esteem (Boothby, Tungatt, & Townsend, 1981; Rotella & Heyman, 1986; Sands, 1978; Stankovich, 1998). San Jose (2003) found that athletes retiring due to an injury demonstrated more psychological disturbances, which resulted in a negative transition. Oglivie and Howe (1982) found that when athletes retire due to injury, they sometimes suffer from distress, which has a tendency to develop into depression, substance and alcohol abuse, and even suicide attempts. Social withdrawal is not uncommon when retiring due to an injury (Lewis-Griffith, 1982). With a career-ending injury, the athletes may play the “what if” game, which can lead to a low self-esteem, by thinking they were not good enough to avoid injury (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). Injury typically does not lead to a positive transition because the athlete may feel as though he/she can still contribute to his/her team.

Webb, Nasco, Riley, and Headrick (1998) found that athletes retiring due to an injury had the most difficult time adjusting when compared to the athletes who had control over their timing of sport retirement. A career-ending injury may “lock” an athlete into his/her current view of athletic identity (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). In order for an athlete to achieve satisfaction in life, he/she may need to adjust his/her athletic identity to one that exists outside of sport competition. If a rehabilitation process is prescribed due to a career-ending injury, the athlete may develop the impression he/she will return to play, which can lead to a depressive

state when the realization of never competing again surfaces (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998).

### **Age**

Athletic retirement may also stem from age. Sport retirement due to age is viewed as depriving the athlete of the satisfaction he/she felt when competing in his/her sport (Stankovich, 1998). Athletes retire at a younger age than most working people, which leaves them a small window of opportunity to compete in a team or professional setting. As one ages, his/her energy level decreases making it harder for the athlete to maintain the physical condition needed for his/her sport (Fender, 1988). Aging makes it more difficult for the athlete to continue playing due to physical changes for most athletes (Fender, 1988). The aging process is difficult for the athlete to cope with, knowing that even though he/she may not have yet reached middle-age, he/she is considered too old to participate in the competitive sport (Fender, 1988). The athlete may feel like he/she is still young enough and still in his/her prime to participate competitively in the sport. By retiring due to age, the athlete is more than likely giving up his/her income (if participating for money) or scholarship money. The athlete knows he/she is young and healthy, which is why it is difficult for the athlete to retire due to his/her age, knowing that most working people do not retire until they are about sixty-five years of age. Torregrosa, Boixados, and Cruz (2004) also found that current athletes have a fear of being 'too old' to compete.

### **Personal**



Athletes may decide to retire from their sport for personal reasons, which is considered a voluntary athletic retirement. Disengagement from one's sport can occur due to an athlete's dislike of the coach or when a conflict occurs among members of the team (Boothby, Tungatt, & Townsend, 1981; Hill & Lowe, 1974; Koukouris, 1991). Koukouris found that an institution's administrators are viewed by the current athletes as influential people who are able to help with athletic retention. Athletes reported feeling the need for the moral support of the administrators at the institution (Boothby, Tungatt, & Townsend, 1981; Koukouris, 1991). Without this positive support, some athletes may disengage from their sport.

## **Theories on Retirement**

### **Disengagement Theory**

The disengagement theory was developed in the early 1960s to describe the dissolving of a person's relationship with others, as a benefit to the individual and society (Chen, 2003; Hochschild, 1975). This theory typically deals with the elderly population. As changes occur in one's life, an individual may experience a response to restore the original nature of the relationships he/she had prior to the retirement process (Chen, 2003; Havighurst, 1961; Hochschild, 1975). In relation to athletics, a retiring athlete naturally desires to maintain his/her social network. Instead of dissolving the current athletic relationships, which is deemed beneficial to one's growth, the athlete attempts to continue these same relationships. This does not always allow the athlete to transition into a new social role or grow as an individual. Life satisfaction may be affected by developing relationships that a person experiences throughout life (Chen, 2003). According to the disengagement theory, when one is satisfied through a social interaction, the result may be satisfaction in his/her life domain (Chen, 2003). Andrews and

Withey (1976) found that a person does not find life satisfaction within athletic competition, but in family, friends, and the usefulness of an education.

Disengagement is defined as the withdrawal of an athlete from his/her sport (Hochschild, 1975; Schell, 1995). The disengagement theory is similar to an employee retiring from work (Koukouris, 1991). This theory suggests that a mutual withdrawal between the sport and athlete is beneficial to the athlete's mental and physical health (Cummings, Dean, Newel, & McCaffrey, 1960). The departure is designed to benefit both the sport by bringing in new athletes and the athlete who may be too old to compete (Tate, 1993). Unfortunately, some athletes may not feel this way, thus suffering a difficult transition. According to this theory, the athlete feels as though he/she had a biological failure due to his/her age and the forced retirement (Washington, 1981).

Disengagement theory suggests that younger athletes are needed to keep the sport progressing. This may not be true for all sports, though, for many athletes peak at different stages in their lives. Unfortunately, this theory does not provide much insight into involuntary athletic retirement or short term separation from the sport competition (Stankovich, 1998). For example, the athlete may be forced to retire short-term due to an injury, and then be able to play again after a few years. Not every athlete may relate to this theory for he/she may not feel that it is beneficial to his/her sport that he/she retires.

While originally developed to explain the relationships of the elderly, the disengagement theory can be used to explain how athletes experience a similar transition with career termination. During this transition process, the athlete forms new relationships, in order to achieve self-growth and begin the transition into a new life phase. Without the new social interactions, the athlete may experience a negative transition, which could lead to a decrease in life satisfaction due to a lack of stable characteristics (Andrews & Withey, 1976). An athlete who

does not feel like he/she is contributing to society may not experience satisfaction in his/her life (Chen, 2003). Growing old in athletic terms may be gradual, yet it is an inevitable event in an athlete's life. This event may cause an athlete to disengage from team relationships and begin developing new interactions within a different social system (Hochschild, 1975). The athlete may become a member of a new social network to find satisfaction, while withdrawing from the society of which he/she had been a member (Hochschild, 1975). Greendorfer (1983) stated that disengagement from a competitive sport and the retirement process has similarities that include a termination or end of a known lifestyle and the need for a social-psychological adjustment into a new role.

The disengagement process may occur before an athlete retires by the individual gradually diminishing his/her role in his/her sport (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985). In order to achieve a disengagement status for an athlete, he/she may need to sever all ties with his/her athletic activities (Chen, 2003). For one to reach a satisfactory level in life, he/she should be able to disassociate from the part of his/her life that is ending in order to build a new identity, known as a radical social change (Chen, 2003). This radical change can have a positive impact on an athlete's life if he/she can accept the change (Chen, 2003). If the change is not readily accepted, a negative transition into career termination may be experienced (Chen, 2003). In disengagement theory, a positive transition occurs when the athlete is able to develop new social relationships and achieve personal life satisfaction. When disengagement occurs, the athletes' equilibrium between themselves and their current society may become disarranged (Cumming, 1963). The athlete leaves his/her comfortable society in athletics to join a new one. By quickly joining a new group, the individual may experience a smooth transition (Cumming,

1963). This new society may be able to help provide support to the athlete through this transition period.

Koukouris (1991) theorized that disengagement from a sport can be a process, which does not have to occur at one time. One's commitment to his/her sport can be defined as "the pledging or binding of the individual to behavioral acts" (Kiesler & Sakumara, 1966, p. 20). Typically, to be successful in intercollegiate athletics, athletes devote themselves to their sport training, making it difficult to disengage from the sport. Participating in athletics as a career involves public acknowledgement and an investment of physical and emotional commitment to one's athletic role (Chartrand & Lent, 1987). This could be a reason why disengagement from one's sport may be difficult and a life changing process.

### **Activity Theory**

The activity theory attempts to describe the meaning of human life, relationships, and events that occur through human activity or sport (Bedny & Karwowski, 2005). Activity is defined as "consisting of internal-cognitive-and external-behavioral-processes, which are regulated by conscious goals of the athlete" (Bedny & Karwowski, 2005). This theory is a unit of analysis for the attention paid to the "social interactions, as a condition of mental development, by analyzing behavioral and cognitive actions" (Bedny & Karwowski, 2005). In the activity theory, a person's actions become automatic and unconscious with his/her participation in competitive sport. When a person participates in an activity for many years a connection develops to that sport; he/she can become goal-oriented in his/her actions, whether mental or practical in application (Bedny & Karwowski, 2005). With goal-directed objectives, cognition, behavior, and motivation are integrated and organized by a mechanism of self-regulation toward

achieving a conscious goal. This application of this theory differs for each individual, depending on a person's intentions, goals, motives, and the type of activity in which one is involved (Bedny & Karwowski, 2005). The activity theory provides a generalization of a method of thinking about how an activity may relate to a person's well being.

The activity theory, as a psychological approach to help understand a person's devotion to an activity or sport, was developed by S.L. Rubinshtein and A. N. Leont'ev (Bedny & Karwowski, 2005; Wheelahan, 2007). Some athletes may enjoy competitive athletics because of the social interactions that can be experienced including, having a sense of belonging. Activity theory can be categorized as subject-oriented, in which social interaction information exchange and personal interactions lead to learning (Bedny & Karwowski, 2005). Sport may be a method of learning new concepts for some athletes, because they may make connections and learn concepts easier there than just in a classroom setting (Stevenson, 2001; Wheelahan, 2007). In athletics, an athlete may have the tactile knowledge to relate the information to a situation or procedure within his/her sport for a better understanding. Belonging to a sport team may provide a sense of power for the athlete in a socio-cultural context, which the person may be better able to understand himself/herself (Wheelahan, 2007). In the social world, the athlete may not have a strong sense of acceptance by a group, whereas in the athletic realm, he/she belongs to a group of individuals who possess a similar set of norms and beliefs. This social group provides a sense of comfort in the form of similar communication and goals.

Engestrom and Miettinen (1999) suggested that the activity theory consists of two processes: internalization and externalization. The internalization process is defined as when a person reproduces the culture of the sport (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999). This process focuses on the socialization within the sport, including the training process in order for an individual to

become confident in being a competent member of the sport (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999). The externalization process occurs when an athlete creates new artifacts in order to transform into a new identity (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999). The athlete's identity may become consumed by his/her sport, so that he/she transforms himself/herself in order to fully belong to that social network. This provides a strong athletic identity and sense of belonging to a group. Some people do not feel they can retire because they do not believe another life exists for them outside of competitive sport (Hawkins & Barone, 2008). Activities can be a source of relief during the sport retirement process. Common activities can include volunteer work, exercising, home improvements, getting involved with politics, or learning new skills (Hawkins & Barone, 2008).

The activity theory is suggested when a person who is involved with an activity may have a positive outlook on his/her well being throughout the retirement process (Havighurst, 1963; Nimrod, 2007). Activity theory is applied when no observable change is noticed in the retired athlete's level of activity (Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953). This is rare, due to the fact that so much time is spent in his/her sport, that it is nearly impossible to devote that much time to another activity. The activity theory is also known as the substitution theory, because the athlete is leaving his/her sport and focusing his/her time and energy on a new activity (Tate, 1993). The new activity must also be meaningful enough to the athlete to allow for a smooth transition, which provides support to this theory. This is difficult to do for it is hard for the athlete to devote enough time or find another meaningful activity that compares to his/her sport (Stankovich, 1998). In order to contribute to a smooth transition, the athlete should devote a comparable amount of time to the new activity as he/she did to the competitive sport (Tate, 1993). Activity theory states that if a positive relationship exists between the athlete and his/her sport, then the

athlete is satisfied and more willing to take on a new activity (Washington, 1981). This can lead to a positive transition from the sport world. However, not every athlete is able to focus on a new meaningful activity to take the place of the competitive sport.

Some athletes may view sport retirement as a time to reduce activity levels and put energy into a new career (Brady, 1988). According to this theory, for an athlete to experience a positive sport career termination, he/she should remain active or develop a new hobby. If the athlete is unable to participate in his/her sport post-athletic retirement, the individual needs to find a meaningful activity to fill the time, in order to have a positive transition (Daniel, 2002; Nimrod, 2007). As long as the athlete remains active or busy throughout the sport retirement process, he/she will have a better chance to achieve a positive transition into a new life phase. Some athletes may view sport retirement as a continuation, which is when the athlete does not view sport retirement as a major event, but as a way for him/her to pursue other activities and a career (Brady, 1988). Even though an athlete transitions through the retirement process, it does not mean the athlete has to hate his/her sport or team; it is a time for new experiences.

The activity theory encompasses the emotion, motivation, and identity of a person to help explain an athlete's sport retirement transition (Roth, 2007). It was originally named the psychological theory of activity, due to the psychological impact a sport has on a person's life (Zinchenko, 2004). Activity impacts a person's personality because of the dialectical role that motives and emotions play in the activity process (Roth, 2007). Emotion is integrated with actions and activity so an athlete can develop deep connections with a sport, including the social interactions and self-identity, which can develop within his/her respected sport. A person's psychological well-being arises or increases as the activity approaches because it is meaningful to that individual (Zinchenko, 2004). An athlete's emotional state may be related to a sport or the

actions within that sport, such as violence, happiness, and sadness that are associated with his/her performance (Roth, 2007). The actions expressed with the competitive sport are methods for the athlete to express him/her self. While life exists for an athlete outside of his/her sport, the activity is what the athlete uses to connect to the world of life (Zinchenko, 2004). It may appear that the athlete is connected strongly to the sport, but in reality the athlete is addicted to the actions the sport provides, including the social interactions and the rigid daily routines (Zinchenko, 2004). Upon sport retirement, the athlete needs to develop a new outlet for his/her emotions and expressions, which can be accomplished with the adoption of a new activity.

### **Continuity Theory**

Continuity theory, similar to the activity theory, states that an athlete will shift his/her energy from his/her sport to other interests (Atchley, 1980). This makes for a more positive transition, since the retired athlete is still busy. However, a difficult transition could occur if the athlete had been immersed solely in his/her sport, which could make one less likely to want to change his/her routine and pursue new interests (Stankovich, 1998). This theory explains why the athlete may stay in contact with his/her sport, but plays a lesser role (Stankovich, 1998). Robinson and Godbey (1997) suggest that the continuity theory does not account for the different life phases, and may not apply in all situations. Although, for the retirement phase of one's life, this theory suggests that as long as the retiree remains as active as prior to the transition, he/she will achieve life satisfaction. The athlete may stay in contact with his/her previous sport, but may shift his/her interest to a different role such as that of a coach. This would help the athlete experience a smooth transition into the sport retirement world.



The Continuity Theory of Aging states the retirement transition process should not be a stressful or negative event, but an opportunity to maintain the original social contacts of the previous lifestyle (Atchley, 1989; Bonsdorff, Shultz, Leskinen, & Tansky, 2009; Quick & Moen, 1998). According to this theory, an athlete should be ready to retire voluntarily, so he/she is able to keep his/her social interactions. This theory also suggests the athlete would have a positive transition and, therefore, would be able to continue to enjoy the activity on a leisure level (Bonsdorff, Shultz, Leskinen, & Tansky, 2009). The Continuity Theory of Aging is mainly implied for a person experiencing change when retiring from his/her job. It can be applied to athletic retirement, since it possesses similar characteristics of the separation from one's sport as it does from an individual's job. This theory does not take into account involuntary or forced retirement. It assumes the athlete recognizes the need for a change in one's life and accepts willingly the transition into sport career termination.

The continuity theory can be described as internal or external in providing an insight as to the need for activity in a retiring athlete's life. Internal continuity describes how a person views himself/herself during life changes (Nimrod, 2007). External continuity accounts for the social and physical changes a person experiences in life (Nimrod, 2007). Continuity and change commonly occur at simultaneous times in a person's life. As an athlete's sport participation changes, he/she may continue to be as active as possible in order to have a successful transition (Nimrod, 2007). Some retirees do not participate in as many activities as they did prior to retirement (Nimrod, 2008). The reinterpretation of activities may be able to help fill the void of the sport competition that has ceased (Nimrod, 2008). Some athletes attempt to avoid sport retirement by maintaining their same routines as prior to this transition as a method of avoiding change and entering into a new social realm. When a retired athlete is able to begin a new

activity to replace his/her competitive sport, happiness is experienced by that individual (Nimrod, 2008; Thompson, 1992). Whether internal or external, the continuity theory attempts to explain how remaining active or involved with a meaningful activity can help with a positive athletic retirement.

It has been stated that Aristotle asserted that living things have “a principle of change and staying unchanged” (O’Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010, p. 75). Continual change occurs in life, giving a person the experience of being who they were and who they are to become (O’Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010). The importance for continual change is not always accepted by an athlete, and can be threatened if a radical personal change is introduced (O’Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010). For athletes, sport retirement can be a source of a radical change, causing the athletes to not want to continue to change. When a person continually changes, his/her past, present, and future have a psychological connection (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; O’Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010). Without these connections, the future may not hold meaning for the individual, including a loss of one’s own well being. Continuity is not just a process for an individual but affects society as well. Studies found that people who do not continuously change had a higher suicide rate, while personal changes within and among cultures lead to a higher life satisfaction rate (Ball & Chandler, 1989; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; O’Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010; O’Sullivan-Lago, Abreu, & Burgess, 2008). The continuity theory suggests that an athlete, in order to be satisfied throughout his/her life, must continuously change (O’Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010). For an athlete, this means being able to change from his/her athletic identity to one without competing in athletics.

In order to be happy in life, an athlete should continue to develop and grow where athletic retirement is a source of this change. A person develops through the culture he/she is part

of which can lead to a traumatic and negative experience when change occurs (O'Sullivan-Lago, Abreu, & Burgess, 2008). The culture or team itself may adjust to the changing times including adding younger members of the team. The athlete must change to meet the demands of the culture and maintain self-happiness.

An athlete's self-identity may be influenced through one's culture, which can affect the transition into sport retirement. An athlete's cultural identity occurs between the relationship of the group and himself/herself (Ferdman & Horenczyk, 2000; O'Sullivan-Lago, Abreu, & Burgess, 2008). This forms a stable identity for the athlete for many years, which is disrupted during athletic retirement. When uncertainties about one's self-identity happen, difficulties in the changing process can occur especially if the person is resistant to the inevitable change (O'Sullivan-Lago, Abreu, & Burgess, 2008). Athletes with a strong athletic identity may want to continue to be involved in some fashion with their respected sport. The Continuity Theory of Aging suggests this is possible if the athlete understands the need of the change in the form of athletic retirement (Bonsdorff, Shultz, Leskinen, & Tansky, 2009). With the continuous change of oneself from one culture to another, develops the fear of not being accepted into a new culture.

Retirement can be considered a form of job withdrawal by leaving a position or career path. Athletic retirement is similar since the athlete has probably been practicing for an extended period of time with that sport. In regards to retirement, the continuity theory states that a person can maintain his/her social contacts while avoiding the negative outcomes from the retirement process (Bonsdorff, Shultz, Leskinen, & Tansky, 2009). In the realm of athletic retirement, the continuity theory states that the athlete is able to maintain his/her friendships while still positively progressing through the retirement process.

When an athlete retires, he/she is faced with the challenge of filling the free-time that was once used to train and compete for his/her sport. Nimrod (2007) speculates that how well an athlete deals with this transition will affect the outcome of the retirement process. Successful adaptation into athletic retirement depends on the initiation of new activities by the athlete (Nimrod, 2007). The person does not necessarily have to begin a new activity, but just modify his/her existing activities (Nimrod, 2007). By the retiree remaining active and using work-related skills, he/she may be able to counter the negative feelings associated with the retirement transition (Price, 2003). According to the continuity theory, if an athlete does not accept changes in his/her life and find an activity to replace the void, he/she will not have a successful athletic retirement (Nimrod, 2007). Nimrod suggested that continuity or change in a person's activity plays an important role in the retirement process outcome. The continuity theory suggests that if a person maintains his/her activity patterns prior to retirement, he/she will remain in good health (Horgas, Wilms, Baltes, 1998). In order to have a positive athletic retirement, the athlete needs to change his/her outlook on his/her activities.

### **Social Learning Theory**

In social learning theory, athletes learn behaviors by observing the social context that surrounds them (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). The behavior is learned by the interactions with others of the same social group, whether directly-taught or indirectly-observed (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). Social learning occurs within athletic groups since they have similar morals and group norms, mimicking small organizations (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005). An athlete can feel like a productive member of this society while competing in his/her sport. When the athlete is forced to retire from his/her sport, that productive feeling may disappear resulting in a desolate

or isolated feeling. During the transition of sport retirement, the sense of belonging to an exclusive society is gone. The society of the sport is enhanced by the group or team cohesion. Members of the team or group have established goals that pertain to their success and happiness (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005). Social learning theory is informative in terms of the motivation for one to belong to a group with similar social norms (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005). Athletes learn from each other and other influences in their lives. Once athletes retire, they usually do not have much to do with the original social group, so none of the members are able to learn about how to positively transition into sport retirement (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005).

A grounded theory approach with social learning may be utilized to examine the athletic retirement process and the transferable knowledge among athletes (Torregrosa, Boixados, & Cruz, 2004). Many student-athletes develop their character through peer learning with their teammates, because of the amount of time they spend together (Delaney & Madigan, 2009; Hirko, 2009). When an athlete is being recruited, he/she is commonly paired with a current athlete for a mentor. Being involved in an organized sport can be a source of learning important life skills because of the amount of time that is devoted to the activity (Rosewater, 2009). Rosewater reported that being involved in competitive athletics helps to develop an individual's intellectual and academic knowledge since it affects key brain functions that are critical to learning.

Social learning theory helps to explain how people can learn within a group or social setting. To help individuals learn an athletic skill, a modeling learning technique may be used to promote learning (Grehaigine, Caty, & Godbout, 2010). This modeling can transfer to the social aspect of the athlete. Athletes learn social skills from their peers, and commonly their organized teams are their social environments. Socialization in sport may influence a person's actions and

motivations (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). Albert Bandura found that people learn new actions and behaviors by observing others (Bandura, 1977; Schunk, 2008). An athletic team can provide this learning opportunity within a social group. The transactional theory, within the social learning theory, states that a person will respond in a situation based upon his/her personal and situational factors or experiences, which is similar to the social learning theory in this instance (Parkes, 1986). When an athlete is transitioning into sport retirement, his/her response can be based upon his/her surroundings. The athlete learns from others within his/her social realm such as teammates.

In the classroom environment, an individual learns skills from his/her peers (Schunk, 2008). This can be transferred to the athletics realm for teammates to learn life skills from each other. Wallhead and O'Sullivan (2007) found that student-athletes were motivated to learn new skills when the tasks were peer led. When peer teaching occurs, people are more likely to commit to the task (Hastie, 2000; Wallhead & O'Sullivan, 2007). Athletes who are mentored by their peers or by former athletes typically experience a successful transitioned into sport retirement. With peer learning, effective communication occurs among the people, since they have similar interests (Wallhead & O'Sullivan, 2007). Environmental influence occurs along with social learning. A person's environment can influence his/her behavior (Schunk, 2008). The classroom is a controlled environment that can provide substantial learning for an individual.

Although a great amount of learning occurs through action, some learning occurs through observing peers. Within the social learning theory context, is the constructed learning process that is also called the constructivist theory, which suggests that learning is a socially-mediated process (Schunk, 2008). Social learning can teach life skills outside of athletics, if an individual is provided with an appropriate model. Athletic teams resemble socially-mediated learning

techniques, since the individual is directed toward peers of similar status by a leader or coach (Schunk, 2008). An individual can learn life skills through social learning. Social learning theory may provide a primary method of learning that the athlete experiences for the many years he/she devotes to that sport. This may contribute to the commitment an athlete develops toward the sport.

According to the social learning theory, an athlete may learn to become deviant within a social context (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). An athlete learns behavior through the interactions with others within the social context by either being directly (taught) or by indirectly-observing and modeling (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). The behavior continues because the athlete observes that it is positively reinforced. Also, social learning may be the main constant force within an athlete's life, so removing it can lead to a life crisis for the person. When an athlete's primary learning technique is removed, he/she then may have to develop a new learning method in a new social environment, which can be a stressor in the athlete's life.

Modeling is a method of social learning. Bandura (1977) theorized that social modeling is a powerful tool to one's behavior. In athletics, athletes may model behaviors after each other including reactions to life without athletics. Social learning may also occur by the learner modeling from his/her coach, a person that is respected within the social network. A coach's philosophy may influence an athlete's relationships and decision-making (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). Holt, Tink, Mandigo, and Fox found that the three main life skills that were associated with team bonding included being initiative, respectful, and possessing teamwork/leadership. While the coaches appeared to have some impact on those life skills, other sources of social learning were facilitated by the team members.

## **Social Cognitive Theory**

The social cognitive theory is an example of the social learning theory. The social cognitive theory suggests that most human learning occurs in a social setting, which can be done by a coach through one's sport (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). Danish and Nellen (1997) speculated that life skills can be taught in combination with athletic skills. Life skills are described as the talents that are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Hodget & Danish, 1999; Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). These include physical, behavioral, and cognitive skills that apply to all areas of life. Athletics can be a means of enhancing and developing these skills. Sport can have a tendency to produce negative outcomes in regards to the teaching of these life skills (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). Peer learning can have a positive effect on an athlete for sport environment (Schunk, 2008). In regards to athletics, an athlete learns about sport retirement from his/her teammates that have transitioned into this new era of life. If the athlete observed a negative transition, he/she has a greater risk of experiencing a negative transition. Through social cognitive learning, an athlete could observe a positive transition and follow that example.

A person's behavior is regulated by self-evaluative reactions to their own actions, which makes this differ from the social learning theory (Schunk, 2008). When an athlete retires from his/her sport, he/she may not know how to behave in another environment. This athlete will continue to behave as he/she did when actively involved in the competitive sport even when no longer in that environment. Upon athletic retirement, the athlete will need to learn from a new social environment, which can be difficult for the athlete. During the retirement process, the athlete may feel a loss of control due to the disruption of a formalized routine (Hawkins &



Barone, 2008). By focusing on what was lost during athletic retirement, the athlete cannot view what can be gained in life (Hawkins & Barone, 2008).

### **Social Breakdown Theory/Labeling Theory**

Social Breakdown/Labeling theory occurs when an outside person labels the retired athlete differently from when he/she was considered an athlete (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973). This theory suggests that when a person is assigned a “label” of whom the person should be then he/she will conform to that identity (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). If the label is considered unfavorable, then the athlete may experience social withdrawal (Stankovich, 1998). A negative label can affect how an athlete views himself/herself and can have a negative impact on his/her life outside of athletics (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). If the label is favorable, then the athlete’s self-concept is strengthened and social reconstruction occurs, leading to a smoother transition (Stankovich, 1998).

Labeling can have a direct affect on an athlete’s behavior as well. The athlete may feel the only thing he/she is competent at in life is his/her sport, if that is the only label he/she receives. Athletes may attempt to negotiate their role-identity although it may be futile since it is difficult for them to alter the nature of outside influences (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). This theory, which has two names, is applicable to the retired athlete since one can observe how the athlete copes with his/her retirement and building friendships outside of athletics.

Society’s evaluation has a significant impact on the athlete (Tate, 1993). If society places a negative evaluation on the newly retired athlete, then he/she is likely to withdraw from the world and into his/her internal self (Tate, 1993). How society judges a retired athlete, whether positive or negative, affects how the athlete views himself/herself and how he/she will react to

his/her new life without the sport. The labeling theory can enforce a person's self-identity (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). In athletics, if a person is labeled only as an athlete, then a strong identity is formed. An athlete may not view himself/herself as being capable to complete tasks well outside of his/her sport. Through this theory, how a person is viewed or labeled affects his/her behavior (Delaney & Madigan, 2009).

### **Self-Perception Theory**

When a person is labeled as an athlete, his/her self-perception can take on the idea that he/she is only good at that one aspect of his/her life. Bem (1972) developed the self-perception theory to describe the commitment an athlete may possess towards his/her sport. The self-perception theory states that people are prompted about their own attitudes by their behavior (Bem, 1972; Chartrand & Lent, 1987). According to the self-perception theory, commitment to a sport begins as a casual act but due to the consistent actions or participation, leads to a development in one's self-perception (Chartrand & Lent, 1987). In relation to this theory, the longer an athlete devotes to his/her sport - beginning at a young age - the greater the shift in his/her self-perception to dominantly athletic status. This commitment may lead to an identity role crisis when athletic retirement occurs. The self-perception may lead to the restriction other activities for the athlete to pursue, including focusing on academics for a future career. The athlete may not be aware that he/she is good at more than just his/her sport or has not been able to pursue other activities (Chartrand & Lent, 1987).

### **Identity Crisis Theory**

The identity crisis theory proposes that as one's social life suddenly changes his/her identity becomes unknown to the athlete (Washington, 1981). An identity crisis occurs when the athlete becomes uncertain of his/her image in regard to the athlete's new social environment (Washington, 1981). An identity crisis also occurs when the main source of an athlete's self-esteem, his/her sport, is suddenly removed (Fender, 1988). Upon retirement, a new identity should be formed by the athlete (Shaffer, 1991). The athlete is then responsible for forming a new identity away from athletics, which may cause dissatisfaction and a difficult transition (Washington, 1981). Without the athlete's sport identity, he/she can become confused in regards to his/her identity. The more immersed the athlete is in his/her sport, the more traumatic the identity crisis is going to be in relation to the transition (Shaffer, 1991). Identity loss is common when an athlete is cut from the team (Lally, 2007). Due to the involuntary or forced retirement, the athlete is not prepared for a new identity (Washington, 1981). An athlete who knows he/she is going to retire is able to establish a new identity and find his/her place outside of the sport world. The athlete's established role and purpose in life is compromised when his/her main focus is suddenly taken away (Shaffer, 1991).

When one has a life-changing event that causes stress, an individual's identity may be in crisis. Sport retirement can lead to psychological and emotional difficulties that may include eating disorders, depression, decreased self-confidence, and substance abuse (Lally, 2007). Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) found that gymnasts who were forced into sport retirement experienced identity confusion, feelings of disorientation, and identity loss. Identity crisis can occur in other areas of one's life when a major trauma occurs (Lally, 2007). A life stress may be athletic retirement, especially for the individual who has devoted his/her life to that sport since childhood (Lally, 2007). Social bonding between teammates can be so strong that they develop their own

language or use of symbols (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). It has been thought that if the dominant self-identity role is removed, then a person may lose his/her overall self-concept of himself/herself (Lally, 2007; Markus, 1977).

### **Thantalogical Theory**

The thantalogical theory describes how athletes treat their former teammates upon retirement (Rosenberg, 1982). This theory mainly focuses on the psychological coping of the athlete upon retirement (Schell, 1995). It is a common reaction from the team to ignore the departed teammate, which can lead to anxiety or embarrassment for the athlete (Stankovich, 1998). This may lead to a social death, which is defined as social isolation and rejection from a former group or team (Stankovich, 1998). The retired athlete may feel as if his/her family does not like or support him/her anymore. The retired athlete may feel resentment towards his/her former teammates, which could lead to psychological difficulties and a negative transition. The thantalogical theory is closely related to the emotions associated with death and dying (Fender, 1988). The stages that closely identify with sport retirement are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, which was taken from the Kubler-Ross' five stages of death and dying in 1969 (Fender, 1988). The thantalogical theory tries to explain the emotions retired athletes feel when departing from their sport, and why some athletes may have difficulties adjusting. Kadlick and Flemr (2008) stated that the thantalogical theory was developed on non-athletic populations and therefore may not be useful in all athletic situations. This theory may be too simple to adequately account for the complex nature of the athletic career termination process (Kadlick & Flemr, 2008).

### **Subculture Theory**

Subculture theory states that an athlete must adapt to a new set of subculture norms according to the new activity that the athlete chooses (Tate, 1993). When a retired athlete takes on a new activity or interest, he/she must adapt to the new set of rules and accepted behaviors that are associated with that activity. The athlete must also adjust to the new social environmental norms (Tate, 1993). The athlete is no longer going to be viewed and treated as an athlete, so he/she must adjust to not receiving benefits from his/her previous athletic status. If the athlete is able to accept the new norms with ease, the subculture theory speculates a smooth transition for the athlete (Tate, 1993).

### **Ethical Theory**

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill formulated the ethical theory of Utilitarianism where actions are right if they are done to promote happiness (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). The ends therefore do justify the means as long as happiness is promoted (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). These obligations are based on two assumptions: decisions are made by a virtue of power and athletics should promote the well-being of the individual rather than the program (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Utilitarianism is used to promote the happiness for the most numbers possible, thus the athlete may suffer to achieve success for the program. Immanuel Kant established a categorical imperative to suggest one should act as to treat humanity as an end but not as a means (Thomas & Ermler, 1988).

In ethical terms, autonomy is used to describe one's acting without constraints by anyone else or physical limitations (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). John Stuart Mill argued that social and political control should be accepted only if it is to keep the individual from harming others

(Thomas & Ermler, 1988). This is related to the coach and athlete relationship. The coach should have control as long as he/she has the best interest of the athlete. He also stated that a person without character is controlled by an outside source (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). This theory can be related to sport by stating an athlete should not be sacrificed for the goal of winning (Ravizza & Daruty, 1985). The athlete should be protected and treated with concern especially in the sport retirement transition process.

## **Conclusion**

Collegiate sport retirement is an inevitable event which should be prepped for by the academic institution so a student-athlete can make a positive impact on society outside of his/her sanctioned sport. Erpic, Wylleman, and Zupancic (2004) found that about 39% of athletes plan for life after competitive athletics while 26% of athletes give no thought to life post organized athletics. They also found that former athletes reported experiencing feelings of underachievement during the sport retirement phase. Athletic retirement quality can be expressed as the amount of psychological and psychosocial difficulties that is experienced during and post the career termination process.

Sport retirement happens each year in every sport and at every level, so it affects many athletes. The student-athletes facing sport retirement should have guidance and direction into the next phase of their lives (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). As suggested by Pearson and Petitpas, preventing the problems that may arise with sport retirement is necessary. A need for interventions such as counseling or workshops to prepare the collegiate student-athlete for the future outside of regular sport competitions and practices appears to be helpful. Coaches can provide guidance to the student-athletes, which can lead to a successful sport retirement (Ryska,

Hohensee, Cooley, & Jones, 2002). When a collegiate student-athlete has a positive career termination transition, it can have a great impact on society as well as on the well-being of the person. Life satisfaction in this scenario appears to be related to how an athlete transitions from the sporting realm to the career world.

Stephan, Torregrosa, and Sanchez (2007) suggested that a multi-dimensional pre-retirement career planning process is necessary for a smooth transition into sport retirement. Career/transition educational programs can help ease the sport-retirement process, resulting in a positive experience for the student-athlete (Gordon, 1995; Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). These programs should not only consider career training or counseling but focus on bodily changes as well (Gordon, 1995; Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). While athletic retirement can be a source of stress, lead to an identity crisis, and adjustment problems, strategies can be employed to ease this transition from sport to work life (Torregrosa, Boixados, & Cruz, 2004). Athletic retirement does not just involve planning for the career world, but encompasses the emotional well being of the person as well adjusting to a new life.

Theories have been developed to help understand the mechanisms behind negative transitions into athletic retirement, in order to develop methods to help the student-athlete through this life phase. Easing sport retirement is not limited to just counseling but includes guidance from peers, coaches, professionals, or even people the student-athlete respects. Brooks, Etzel, and Ostrow (1987) conducted a survey on athletic retirement that found that athletes felt that collegiate athletic advisors provided the best overall guidance to athlete's facing sport retirement. The activity and disengagement theories may be considered prescriptive theories as methods for a person to cope with the separation from a competitive sport (Nimrod, 2007). The activity and continuity theories may be considered adaptive strategies for dealing with changes

that occur in life (Nimrod, 2007). Chartrand and Lent (1987) found that student-athletes having a high commitment to their sport have a narrower range of acceptable alternative options. This commitment suggests that athletes may need extra guidance prior to sport retirement so that they understand the options available. These theories offer reasons and solutions to help retiring athletes have a positive transition into sport retirement. What they do not suggest is who should be designated to help the athletes realize these options and take advantage of them so a positive transition may occur.

The majority of the literature focuses on retired athletes recalling past events and feelings, which may not be accurate due to a lack of memory of the event. Also, many so many influences on the sport retirement process, studies are necessary so every student-athlete has a plan for post sanctioned athletics. This is so the person may have a positive impact in society and a positive transition process into his/her new life phase. So in conclusion, with the voids in the literature regarding current collegiate student-athlete preparation for the sport retirement process, this study is necessary to promote awareness for this area of study.



## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### **Introduction**

Since athletic retirement can be a transition period for an athlete entering the post competition portion of his/her life, a means to aid this process into a positive event should be considered. In order to help retiring athletes experience a positive transition, the common reasons behind one's desire to participate in competitive athletics should be examined. Also, it should be determined who should provide the aid to an athlete in order for him/her to experience a positive transition. An athlete's transition into sport retirement is usually dictated by the factors relating to his/her retirement, so by understanding those factors one might be able to help an athlete become better prepared for this transition or process (Hill & Lowe, 1974; Mihovilovic, 1968; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Rosenburg, 1980). Since sport retirement can either be voluntary or involuntary, the time for athletic career termination may not have an exact date. This study examines current collegiate student athletes' perceptions about their preparedness for life after competitive collegiate athletics and who they feel should provide them with necessary information about the transition period.

#### **Research Questions**

1. Do current student-athletes feel they are properly prepared to enter into sport retirement (voluntarily or involuntarily) by their institutions?

- 1a. Do current student-athletes feel the institution/organization they are associated with should provide athletic retirement planning or aid?
2. Does the relationship the athlete has with his/her coach affect the goals of sport retirement for that athlete?
3. Does an athlete's motivation for collegiate participation affect his/her goals for life after competitive sport?
4. Do the current student-athletes have a preference about who the information comes from regarding sport retirement?
5. Does a current student-athlete's economic status affect his/her goals for the sport retirement process?

## **Participants**

Two hundred thirty-two current student athletes from the four Midwestern institutions (2 NCAA Division I and 2 NCAA Division II) were asked to participate in the study. These were the first 232 that had a practice or met in the designated location deemed by the institutions and researcher on the specific day the researcher was at that institution. The researcher traveled to each institution to hand out the survey on a specified day in the fall. The institutions selected offered similar number and types of sports. Traditional sports offered at the institutions included: football, basketball, volleyball, cross country, track and field, soccer, golf, and tennis. Schools selected for the study were in close proximity of each other with similar resources. The participants included male and female student-athletes of college age.

The participants were asked nine demographic and two economic questions related to sport participation, gender, age, race, scholarship status, job status, and income (See Tables 1-8).

In reference to sport participation, 51 (22%) were track and field/cross country athletes. Forty-two (18%) of the respondents were basketball players, 33 (14%) were football players, 29 (13%) were baseball players, 28 (12%) were softball players, 22 (10%) were volleyball players, and 15 (6%) were soccer players. Other athletes that were surveyed include 6 (3%) of wrestlers, while cheer and rowing both had three (1%) of the participants. Figure 1 represents the sport participation of the survey participants.

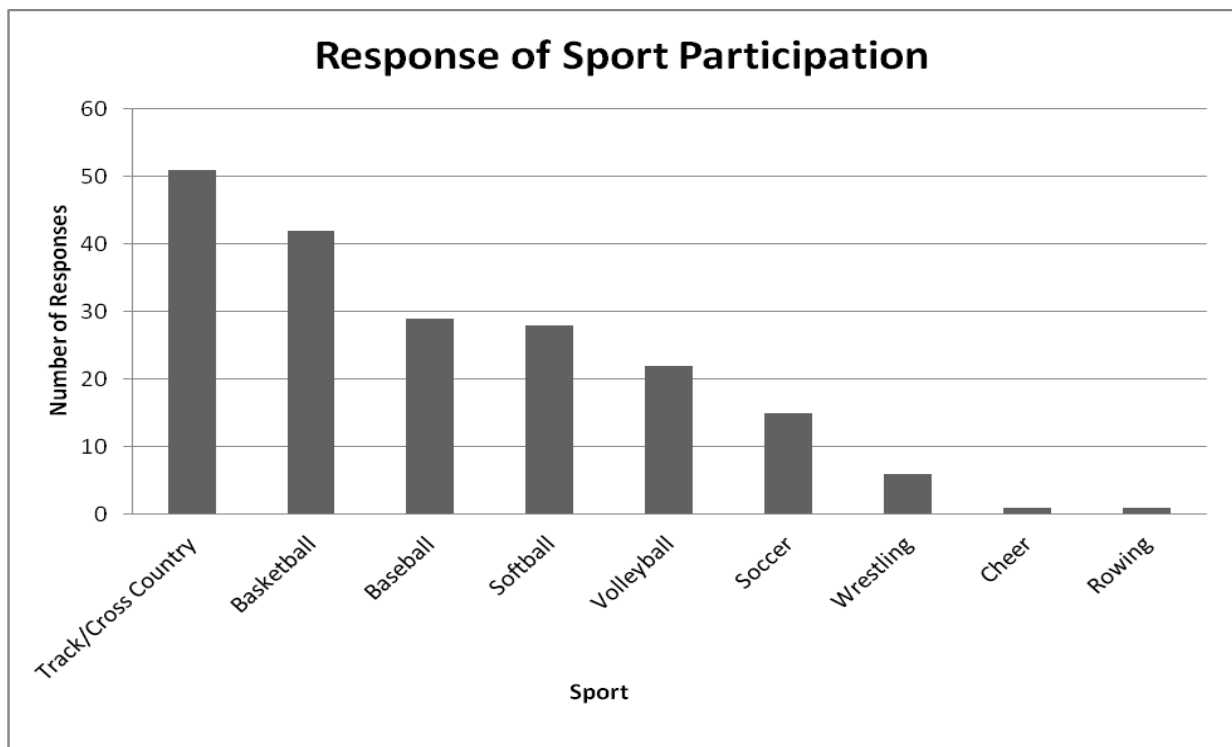


Figure 1 Response of Sport Participation

The mean age of the participants was 19.81 with a standard deviation of 1.377. The age range for the subjects used in this research project was 18 to 25 years old. The mean income reported was \$89704.55 with a standard deviation of \$65629.18. The income range reported was

\$1,000 to \$300,000. Eighty-one percent (N = 188) of the participants did not respond to this economic question.

Table 1 Participant Gender Demographics

Gender	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Male	116	50
Female	116	50
Total	232	100

Table 2 Participant Race Demographics

Race	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Caucasian	197	85
African-American	21	9
Native American	2	1
Hispanic	2	1
Other	10	4
Total	232	100

Table 3 Participant Scholarship Status Demographics

Scholarship Status	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Athletic Scholarship	166	72
No Athletic Scholarship	66	28
Total	232	100

Table 4 Participant Athletic Year of Competition Demographics

Athletic Year of Competition	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Redshirt Freshman	35	15
Freshman	55	24
Sophomore	30	13
Junior	54	23
Senior	48	21
5 <sup>th</sup> Year Senior or Higher	10	4
Total	232	100

Table 5 Participant Academic Year Demographics

Academic Year	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Freshman	67	29
Sophomore	62	27
Junior	47	20
Senior	47	20
5 <sup>th</sup> Year Senior or Higher	9	4
Total	232	100

Table 6 Participant Participation Status Demographics

Participation Status	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Regular Starter	146	64
Regular Substitute	42	18
Not Play Often/Not Travel	41	18
Total	229	100

Table 7 Participant Job Status Demographics

Job Status	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Full Time Job	1	<1
Part-Time/Work Study Job	44	19
No Job	187	81
Total	232	100

Table 8 Participant Income Source Demographics

Primary Income Source	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Self Primary Income Source	57	41
Not the Primary Income Source	83	59
Total	140	100

## Procedure

A quantitative approach with a 112-question survey consisting of the General Attitude Survey, a modified Student Athletes' Motivation Towards Sports and Academics Questionnaire (SAMSAQ-R), a modified Motives for Physical Activities Measure-Revised (MPAM-R), and a

modified Athletes' Retirement Decision Inventory (ARDI-R) (See Appendix A) was given out at participating institutions and used in this situation. All measures were modified to reflect the verb tense for the current student-athlete participants and were adjusted to utilize a 7-point Likert scale. Attached to each survey was a consent letter for the participants to read (See Appendix B). By completing the survey, the participants consented to the study. The survey was delivered to the Division I and Division II institutions located in the Midwest, in the fall semester of the school year. The researcher visited the institutions to gain consent for participation from school officials (the first schools to consent to participation were utilized in the study). The questions were phrased in such a manner that provided the researcher with the ability to assess the opinions of the participants regarding sport retirement issues. This quantitative methodology provided an analysis of the opinions of current athletes about the sport retirement process.

The researcher contacted the athletic director for each institution to gain permission for using the current-student athletes in the study and establish a date to visit the campus. The participants were provided a consent form to inform them briefly about the study and their rights. The participants could choose to not participate or cease participation at any time with no repercussions by the institution or researcher. The questionnaires were completely anonymous and confidential. Individual information was not released to the institutions or personnel associated with these organizations. None of the questionnaires asked for the participant to include any identifying information. The questionnaires were only viewed by the researcher and were destroyed upon completion of the study. Participants were given access to the research findings if they informed the researcher of this request. No incentives were provided for the student participation in this study. Consent was implied by the participant completing the questionnaires. The participants were provided with the questionnaires and writing utensils prior

to a practice or organized meeting. The participants completed the survey then placed them into a manila envelope provided by the researcher. After all of the questionnaires from the participating institutions were collected, the answers were analyzed to determine their relation to the research questions.

### **Data Analysis**

To perform the quantitative analysis, the General Attitude Survey, a modified Student Athletes' Motivation Towards Sports and Academics Questionnaire (SAMSAQ-R), a modified Motives for Physical Activities Measure-Revised (MPAM-R), and a modified Athletes' Retirement Decision Inventory (ARDI-R) were distributed to the participants. Each survey included Likert scale questions. The questions focused on the opinions of the athletes regarding their future, their relationships with the coaches and teammates, their future plan (if any) beyond athletics, and their motivations for participating in collegiate athletics. The survey also focused on the opinions of the athletes as to who they felt would best provide the information to them about a future outside of athletics. The following demographic questions were included in the questionnaires: age, gender, year of competition, sport, race, and financial status. The Likert scale was used to rank the closed-ended questions to determine how a participant felt about a specific question.

The statistical analyses that were used in the data analysis included descriptive statistics including mean and median, Independent samples *t* test, and frequency counts. An independent *t*-test was conducted on selected questions. Independent samples *t*-tests was used to assess the student-athlete views regarding their coaches, on the motivations of the athlete, and if the athletes have a determined plan. A Chi Square was used to assess if a relationship between

having a developed future plan and if the academic portion of the institution should only be responsible for providing the transition information. Frequencies were used in the ranking question to determine the most popular answer.

### **Sampling Technique**

The population available at each institution from which data could be collected was small and all participating in collegiate athletics so random sampling could not be used. Accordingly, a convenience sampling technique was used taking into consideration the institutions located in the Midwest region.

### **Response Rate**

Two hundred thirty-two completed surveys total were collected from the four institutions. All were returned at the time of the visit to the institution. Thirty-four percent (N = 79) of the surveys were not completed entirely by the participants by leaving one or more questions unanswered. These were still used for the answers that were provided by the participants. The instrument was coded and data entered into the statistical SPSS (IBM SPSS Statistics 19.0) software by the researcher upon return to her professional location.

### **Measures**

#### **Student Athletes' Motivation Towards Sports and Academics Questionnaire (SAMSAQ)**

The original Student Athletes' Motivation Towards Sports and Academics Questionnaire (SAMSAQ) was designed to help predict the academic performance of college athletes (Gaston-Gayles, 2005). This topic has been a concern for collegiate institutions and the governing body



of the NCAA. Institutions and the NCAA are interested in athletic graduation rates and progress towards obtaining a degree. While common predictors focus on a student's grade point average and standardized test scores, the SAMSAQ centers on an athlete's motivation to attend college (Gaston-Gayles, 2005). Since not every student performs well on standardized tests, Bowen and Levin (2003) suggested that academic performance may be linked to motivation, time management skills, and creativity. Simons, Van Rhee, and Covington (1999) and Silva and Weinberg (1984) found that student-athletes possess motivation for their sports yet many lack that trait for academic success. Motivation can be described as the intensity and direction of behavior. Motivation is the amount of work and effort one applies to a particular task.

The SAMSAQ is designed around achievement motivation theories and the expectancy-value model (Gaston-Gayles, 2005). The achievement-motivation theory suggests that it is an individual's choice as to how much persistence and effort he/she will apply to a specific task (Gaston-Gayles, 2005; Weiner, 1984). A person who is highly motivated will approach tasks with a need to be successful. The expectancy-value theory examines the probability that a person will complete a task, and the value related to the task will predict the overall success an individual will experience (Gaston-Gayles, 2005; Spence & Helmreich, 1983). The ability to successfully complete a task is governed by the individual's concept of that task and the value he/she places upon it (Gaston-Gayles, 2005). The SAMSAQ assesses that the success a student athlete has in sports and academics is based on motivation. Gaston-Gayles (2005) reported that the reliability of the SAMSAQ questions dealing with athletic motivation is high with an alpha level of .86. The SAMSAQ questions focusing on career athletic motivation has a reported reliability of .84. The SAMSAQ questions focused on academic motivation had a reported reliability of .79 (See Table 9).

### **Athletes' Retirement Decision Inventory (ARDI)**

The original Athletes' Retirement Decision Inventory (ARDI) was developed to assess the sport retirement decision process among student athletes (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006). Through this survey, a better understanding of the process by which competitive athletes decided to end their careers can be assessed. The distinction between voluntary and involuntary athletic retirement is not always clear because of the factors in which the retirement may be derived (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). The ARDI questionnaire attempts to group common reasons one has when choosing early athletic retirement into main grouping factors in order to provide a better understanding of why an athlete leaves his/her sport (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006). To better understand the structure of the reasons behind athletic retirement, this questionnaire is a multidimensional tool that one can use to account for the complex process of deciding to leave his/her sport (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006). The ARDI uses a push, pull, anti-pull, and anti-push view to help identify sport retirement factors. The push factors are defined as negative considerations for athletic retirement such as disliking the sport or coach (Shultz, Morton, & Weckerle, 1998). The pull factors are positive considerations for an athlete, such as having the freedom to pursue other interests or a career (Shultz, Morton, & Weckerle, 1998). The anti-push factors assess an athlete's view of his/her attachment to his/her sport such as the social interactions and friendships that develop (Mullet, Dej, Lemaire, Raiff, & Barthorpe, 2000). The anti-pull factors are defined as the risks or costs an athlete perceives about his/her future and the absence of a social network (Mullet, Dej, Lemaire, Raiff, & Barthorpe, 2000). The ARDI combines all of these factoring explanations to provide a clear insight into the motivations of an athlete considering sport career termination. Fernandez, Stephan, and Fouquereau (2006) reported that

the reliability for the questions in the ARDI survey related to an athlete feeling he/she is afraid of adapting to a job outside of him/her competing in sport an alpha level of .90. It was also reported that the reliability for the questions in the ARDI survey relating to an athlete experiencing positive thoughts about life after the end of his/her sports career as high with an alpha level of .88 (See Table 9). Since this study is examining current athletic views, the push and anti-push factors do not apply and will not be utilized.

### **Motives for Physical Activities Measure – Revised (MPAM-R)**

Ryan, Frederick, Lepas, Rubio, and Sheldon (1997) revised the Motives for Physical Activities Measure into a revised version that was modified to fit the format for this study. The original Motives for Physical Activities Measure – Revised (MPAM-R) is used to assess the multiple motives for physical activity including enjoyment, body relations, competence or challenges, social aspects, and health-fitness issues (Ryan, Frederick, Lepas, Rubio, & Sheldon, 1997). Enjoyment is described as being physically active, because it is fun, interesting, and makes the person happy. Body relations can be inferred to one's appearance and viewing oneself as physically attractive. Competence or challenges refers to an individual participating in physical activity to improve in an activity. Social aspects can be described as participating in an activity because it allows a person to be with his/her friends. Health and fitness can be referred to participating in physical activity to be physically fit and active (Ryan, Frederick, Lepas, Rubio, & Sheldon, 1997). The questionnaire has participants rank their satisfaction level - high or low – and the reasoning behind their physical activity participation (Ryan, Frederick, Lepas, Rubio, & Sheldon, 1997). MPAM-R assesses several behavioral outcomes such as attendance, persistence, or continuation of physical activity. It can also be used to predict a person's mental health and

well-being (Ryan, Frederick, Lepes, Rubio, & Sheldon, 1997). The MPAM-R categorizes the subject's answers into subcategories or motives where correlations were run between the subscales.

This questionnaire considers intrinsic and extrinsic factors that a person may consider for participation in physical activity. Intrinsic factors are those in which the person participates in physical activity for personal satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983). These factor examples are competence and enjoyment. Spending time with friends would also be considered more intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic factors are described as one's participation in physical activity to obtain rewards or outcomes that are separated from the behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983). Brawley and Vallerand (1984) suggested that regardless of the motivation for beginning physical activity, intrinsic factors are the reason for an individual to continue the activity long term. The questionnaire attempts to gain an insight into the motives behind one's exercise prescription and reasons to continue to participate in physical activity. Reed and Cox (2007) reported that the reliability of the questions for the MPAM-R for the subscales was high with the alpha being .87 (See Table 9).

### **General Attitude Survey**

The originally designed survey or the General Attitude Survey was designed to assess how student-athletes felt about who should provide necessary sport retirement information. The General Attitude Survey consisted of two qualitative questions to gain an insight to the plans for the student-athlete's future. The General Attitude Survey consisted of questions to gain an insight to the different university personnel of who should provide the transition guidance and

information from current student-athletes. This survey consisted of three subscales, so reliability was conducted on each of them (See Table 9).

### Reliability

Reliability was calculated in the SPSS program by grouping similar questions for each survey of the revised surveys and compared them to the previous literature as presented in Table 9.

Table 9 Reliability of Surveys

Measure	<u>Original</u> Cronbach's Alpha	<u>Revised</u> Cronbach's Alpha
SAMSAQ		
CAM	.86	.51
SAM	.84	.59
AM	.79	.25
ARDI		
Pull	.90	.90
Push	.88	.84
MPAM-R		
Appearance	.87	.90
Competence	.91	.86
Fitness	.85	.79
Interest/Enjoyment	.54	.90
Social	.72	.68
General Attitude Survey		
Coach		.78
Professional		.71
Academic		.51

The high alphas mean the subscales are related to each other and are reliable. The scores among the participants were consistent. The academic subscale of the General Attitude Survey

had a Cronbach's alpha of .51, indicating the participants did not find these items related. So these two items were treated as separate entities on the subscale. The low alphas of the SAMSAQ were noted in the case for this study. All of these low alphas indicate the items in the subscales were not related in this instance and should be treated as separate entities. The low alphas in each of the SAMSAQ subscales indicate the participant responses were not consistent. This indicates that this subscale of the overall survey was not appropriate for the participants utilized. This scale was still utilized in the analysis of the results with its limitations taken into consideration.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA AND RESULTS

The purpose of this exploratory, descriptive study was to determine if current collegiate student-athletes possessed a future plan for life after sanctioned athletics and who should provide sport retirement information. This chapter presents the research questions with the statistical testing results.

#### **Coding**

Each subscale in the survey was coded and entered into an SPSS statistical analysis software. The questions that were in the same category of the different surveys were added together to form one variable. A content analysis was conducted on the open-ended questions after they were coded into quantitative variables based on the similar answers. For the open-ended question one asking if the participant has a formulated plan post sport competition, the multiple variables from the different answers were recoded and added into one variable of plan or no plan. While all of the questions from the parts of the survey were coded into new variables of similar content, not all parts of the survey (MPAM-R and ARDI-R) were used in the reporting of the results.

## Research Questions

### Research Question 1

*Do current student-athletes feel they are properly prepared to enter into sport retirement (voluntarily or involuntarily) by their institutions?*

*Do Current student-athletes feel the institution/organization they are associated with should provide athletic retirement planning or aid?*

For this research question, qualitative question one was coded into a quantitative question based on the answer(s) provided by the participant. Since this was a qualitative question, the participants could provide more than one answer that was also coded. A content analysis was conducted on the open ended question. The answers were categorized into having a plan – providing an answer with a definite direction or career path for life after competitive athletics – or no plan – providing general answers about a life or career plan after competitive athletics. The question was formulated to not lead the participant into a directed answer. The assumption was made that if a participant answered within a plan category, the academic institution was responsible for preparing him/her for a future career outside of competitive, sanctioned athletics. Career was defined as a specific job for in the future in which the student is studying at his/her institution.

Descriptive statistics were used to assess if current student-athletes believe they are prepared to enter into sport retirement based on the qualitative one question answer(s) provided by the participants as presented in Tables 10-12. Some participants provided multiple answers that were coded into the two categories (plan or no plan), therefore increasing the total number of answers and the N value. The majority (73%) of answers (N = 232) provided by the current student-athletes reported already having a plan for life after sanctioned athletics. Some current



student-athletes provided answers ( $N = 86$ ) that included not having a specific plan for life after sanctioned athletics (27%). When multiple answers were removed, the majority of current student-athletes have a formulated plan for life after sanctioned athletics (85%) compared to those who do not have a developed plan (15%). Figure 2 demonstrates the division of the plans for the participants (multiple answers were used in these results increasing some  $N$  values).

Table 10 Plan and No Plan Descriptive Statistics

Category	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Plan	232	73
No Plan	86	27
Total	318	100

Table 11 Plan Category Descriptive Statistics

Category	<i>N</i>	Percentage
Plan		
Career	130	56
Further Schooling/Graduate School	75	32
Coach	24	11
Starting a Family	3	1
Total	232	100

Table 12 No Plan Category Descriptive Statistics

Category	<i>N</i>	Percentage
No Plan		
General Job	29	34
Professional Sport	25	29
Non-Specific Sport Involvement	22	25
Undecided	10	12
Total	86	100

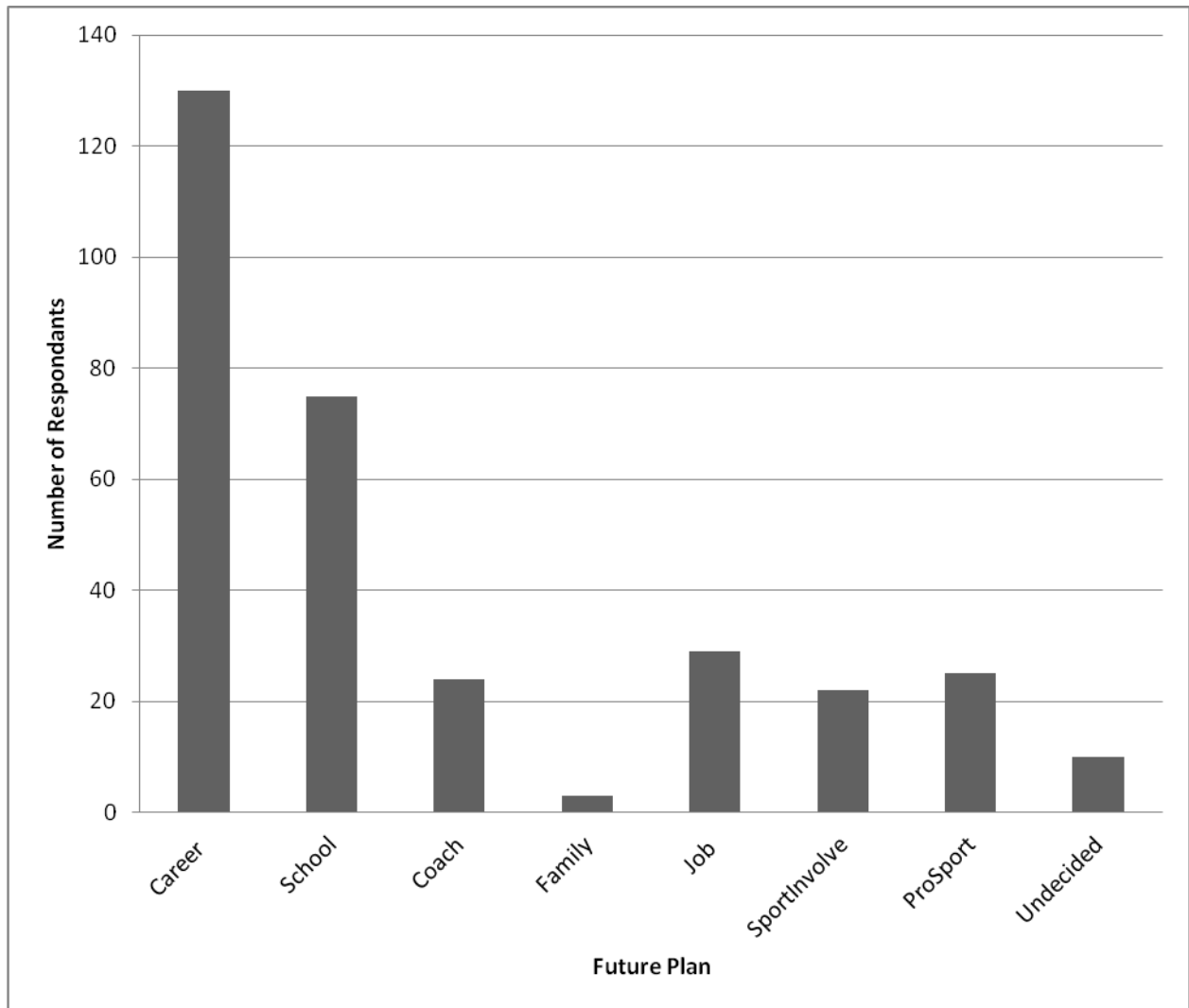


Figure 2 Future Plan Response

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether current student athletes felt the sport retirement transition information should come from the academic side of the educational institution and if that affected having a plan or not for post sport retirement. The two variables from questions on the General Attitude Survey (questions 6 and 7) and plan or not (yes or no) were used to analyze this question. Having a plan and feeling the transition information should solely come from the academic side of the institution were found to not be

significantly related, Pearson  $X^2$  (2, N = 137) = 1.41,  $p = .236$ . This is shown in Table 13. The alpha was set at .05. Current student-athletes – having a developed plan or not - do feel their institution, more than the academic side, do have some responsibility for providing information regarding the sport retirement process.

Table 13 Plan or Not with Academics being Source of Retirement Information

			PlanOrNot		Total
			no	yes	
AcademicRecode	Disagree	Count	11	70	81
		Expected Count	8.9	72.1	
		% Within	13.6%	86.4%	100%
	Agree	Count	4	52	56
		Expected Count	6.1	49.9	
		% Within	7.1%	92.9%	100%
Total			15	122	137
			10.9%	89.1%	100%

## Research Question 2

*Does the relationship the athlete has with his/her coach affect the goals of sport retirement for that athlete?*

An independent-samples  $t$  test was conducted on the questions on the General Attitude Survey that relate to student-athletes' relationship with the coach and having a developed career plan. This was to evaluate the research question regarding the relationship an athlete has with his/her coach affects the athlete's future planning process for life after sanctioned collegiate athletics. This test was not significant,  $t(135) = .170$ ,  $p = .865$ , indicating that no matter the type

of relationship an athlete has with his/her coach, he/she is still able to plan for his/her future life outside of college athletics. This indicates that coaches do not focus on an athlete's life after sanctioned college athletics, which could lead to a negative and difficult transition. Current student-athletes on average generally have a developed plan ( $M = 25.21$ ,  $SD = 5.970$ ) for their lives after athletics compared to athletes who do not have an established plan ( $M = 24.93$ ,  $SD = 6.26$ ) based on the results of the question from the General Attitude Survey. The type of relationship (positive or negative) a current student-athlete has with his/her coach does not influence the athlete from having a developed life plan for when competitive collegiate athletics are finished. The current student-athlete does not need a positive relationship in order to have a life or career plan.

### **Research Question 3**

*Does an athlete's motivation for collegiate participation affect his/her goals for life after competitive sport?*

To answer the third research question of asking if an athlete's motivation for collegiate participation affect his/her goals for life after competitive sport, descriptive statistics were used from the questions on the SAMSAQ-R and the General Attitude Survey question. These related to having a career plan to determine the main motivation and independent-samples  $t$  tests were run on the motivations and if the athletes have a determined plan. The standardized mean scores were found by taking the means and dividing them by the number in each subscale. The majority of student-athletes reported participating in their sport as a means to gain an education (standardized mean score 5.59) by having a higher average reporting in this section of the SAMSAQ-R. Some student-athletes participate in his/her sport in order to pursue the sport at a

higher or professional level (standardized mean score 4.64). Other student athletes reported participating in their sports because they enjoy the social atmosphere (standardized mean score 4.91). The subscales of the SAMSAQ-R survey were used to provide these descriptive statistics as to the motivation for participating in collegiate athletics. According to these results, participating in collegiate athletics is mostly used as a means of attaining an academic degree in order to have a career or to further one's education as discovered in research question one. Standardized scores were used for these results since the subscales each had a different number of total questions.

A significant outcome,  $t(227) = 2.700, p = .007$ , was found between playing one's sport at the college level for academic reasons and having a developed plan for life after that sport ( $M = 74.39, SD = 21.47$ ) compared to the mean of those who do not have a developed future plan ( $M = 63.80, SD = 20.66$ ). This would be expected since most current student-athletes have a career or school plan for when one's sport participation is finished. No relationship,  $t(227) = .786, p = .433$ , was found between athletes participating in sport for a future in that sport and having a developed plan for sport retirement ( $M = 13.99, SD = 6.44$ ) compared to those who do not have a developed future plan ( $M = 13.03, SD = 7.92$ ). An athlete participating in his/her sport in order to play at a higher level has no affect on one having a plan for the future. There is a significant positive outcome,  $t(227) = 1.730, p = .043$ , between participating in one's sport for social reasons and having a developed plan post sport career ( $M = 39.66, SD = 7.94$ ). Those participating in sanctioned sport for social reasons are more likely to have a future plan for life after sport retirement to those who do not have a developed future plan ( $M = 37.11, SD = 8.42$ ). This is likely because they are interacting with others experiencing similar situations. A one-tailed  $t$  test was used in the direction of the research question. The motivation of participating in

college athletics for social reason has no affect on that person having a plan for when that sport career ends. People who participate in collegiate athletics as a means of gaining an education are more likely to have a plan for life after competitive, sanctioned sport.

#### **Research Question 4**

*Do the current student-athletes have a preference about who the information comes from regarding sport retirement?*

Frequencies were run on the ranked data to determine who the current student-athletes felt should provide information and guidance regarding planning for life after sanctioned athletics. Figures 3, 4 and 5 represent the number one, two, and three rankings as to who the participants felt should provide information about the sport retirement process. Forty-nine percent (N = 113) of the subjects ranked the academic department as being the main or number one source of information. Thirty-one percent (N = 72) ranked the coach as the main or number one source of where information regarding life after competitive athletics. Ten percent (N = 21) reported that one's own family should be the number one source for this information. Sport medicine professionals had 2% (N = 5) of the subjects stating they should be the number one source for information regarding life plans after sport competition.

Forty-four percent (N = 101) of the subjects reported that the coach should be the second most important person to provide information regarding plans for life after sport competition. The academic department had 27% of the subjects (N = 63) feeling they should be second ranked for providing the necessary information. Eleven percent (N = 26) ranked the sports medicine professionals as the number two source for this information.

The third ranked source for who should provide the information is the athletic department (32% or N = 73), the sports medicine professional staff (31% or N = 71), and the coach (17% or N = 39). The fourth ranked sources for whom should provide the information include the athletic department in general (40% or N = 93), sports medicine professionals (39% or N = 91), and the academic department (7% or N = 17). The fifth ranked source for whom should provide the information include the athletic department (14% or N = 33) and the sports medicine professional staff (13% or N = 31). Other sources that were included in the ranked data include former players receiving a number one ranking at 1% (N = 2) , one's personal family as a number one ranking receiving 9% of the responses (N = 21), and oneself as the main source with 1% of the response (N = 3).

When the coach and sports medicine are added into the athletic department, that department as a whole is ranked as the main source of where the life planning information should be delivered and not the academic department. When those two variables are removed, the academic department, including academic advisors, is ranked as the main source of information. This department is felt to not only use the student-athletes as a means to promoting the department, financially, recognition, and winning record, but have an interest in these athletes as educated professionals after the competition ends.



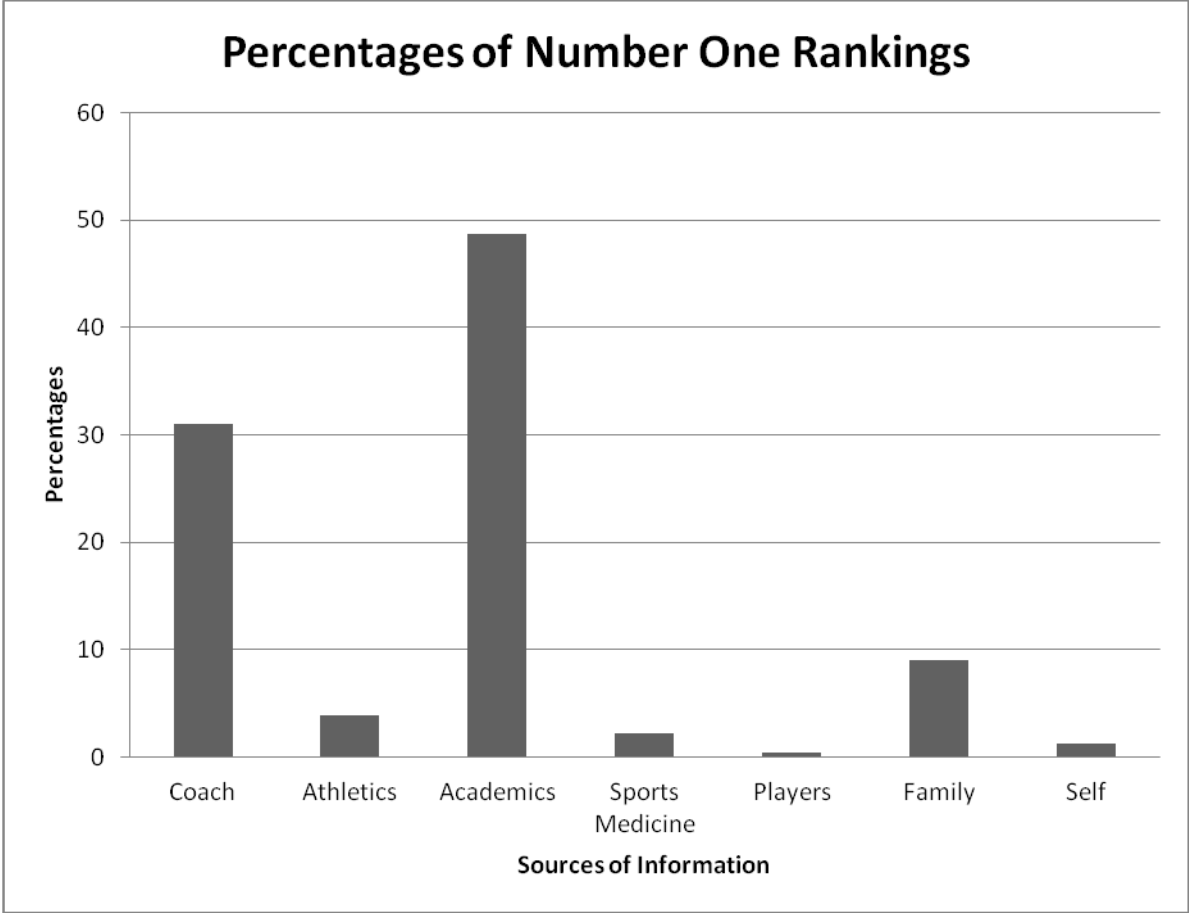


Figure 3 Percentages of Number One Rankings

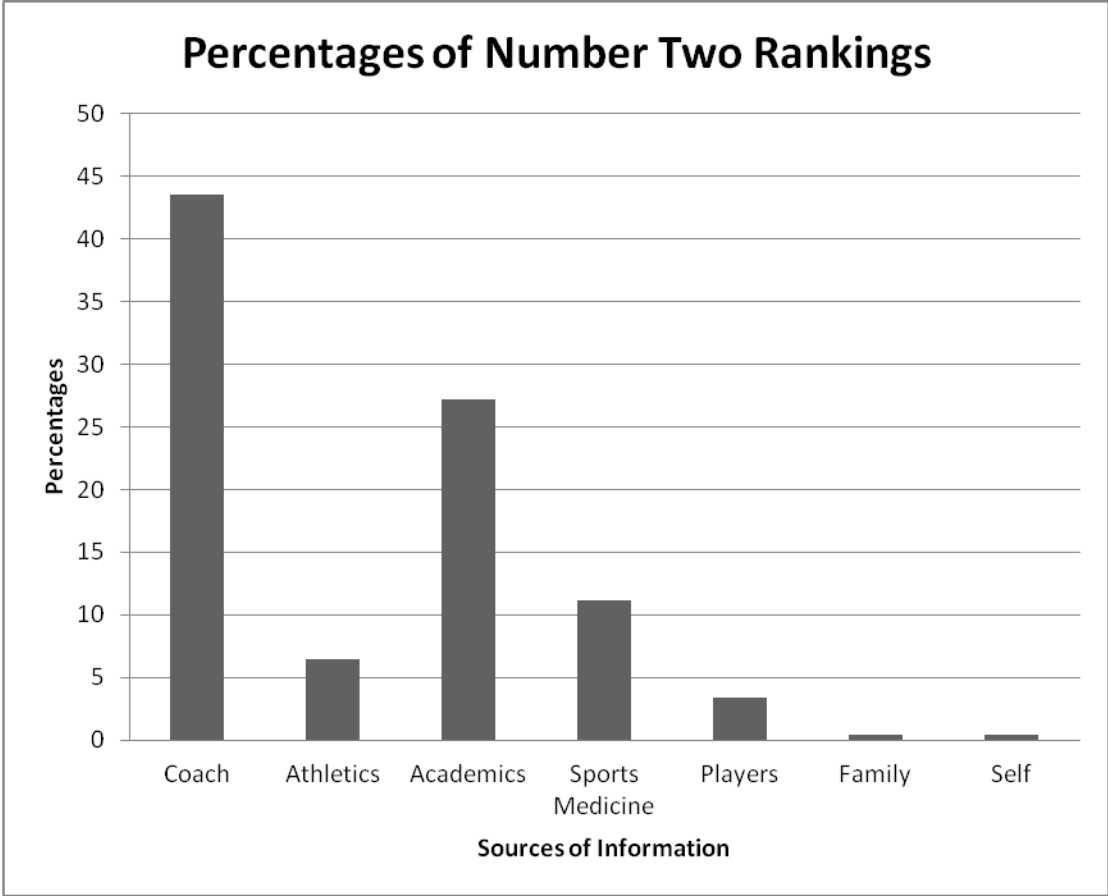


Figure 4 Percentages of Number Two Rankings

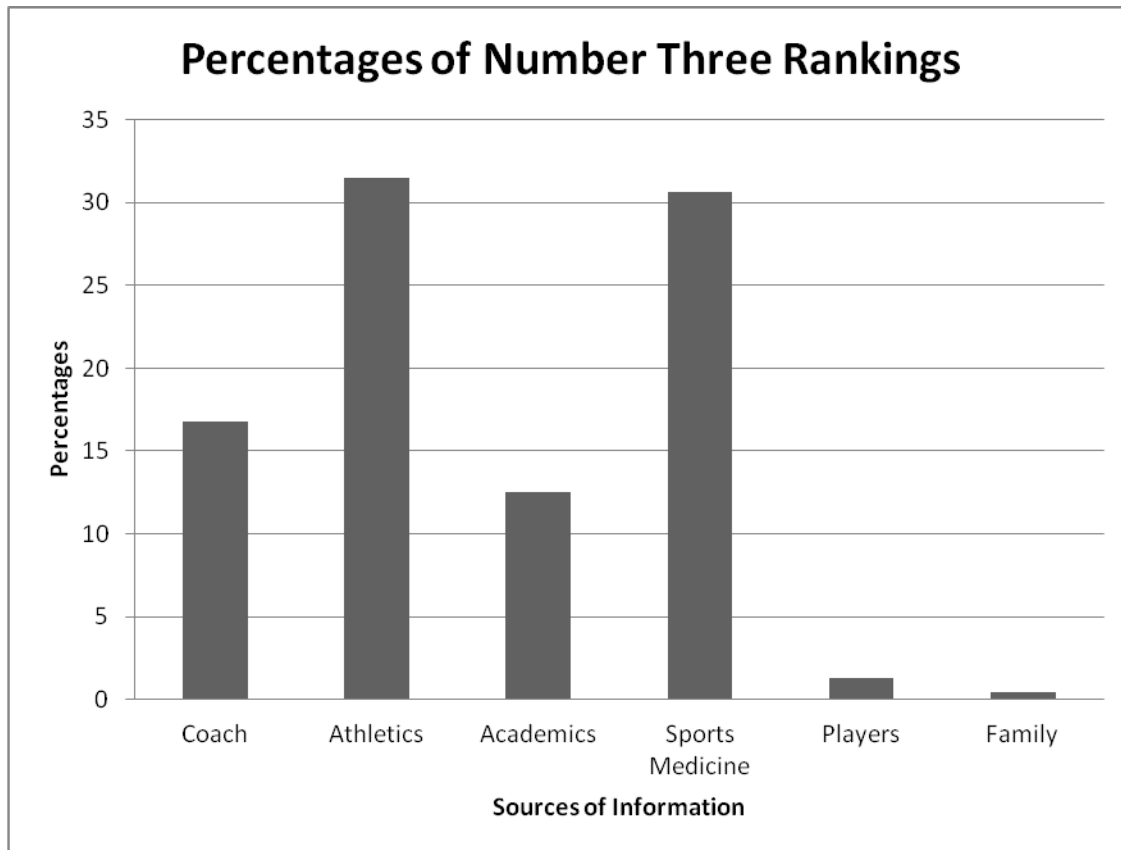


Figure 5 Percentages of Number Three Rankings

### Research Question 5

*Does a current student-athlete's economic status affect his/her goals for the sport retirement process?*

An independent-samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the fifth research question in that if a current student-athletes' financial status affect the athlete from having a developed plan for life after competitive collegiate athletics. This was related to the income and career plan question on the original survey. The test was not significant,  $t(42) = 1.524$ ,  $p = .135$ , revealing that the economic status of the current student-athlete does not predict if the athlete will have a developed life or career plan. Student-athletes in regards to one's financial status on average

have a set career plan ( $M = 94400$ ,  $SD = 66471.04$ ) for once their collegiate athletic career is over compared to those not having a set plan ( $M = 42750$ ,  $SD = 32612.63$ ). There was no significant difference between the means to show a relationship in this study. Table 14 represents these descriptive statistics. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was quite wide ranging from -16761.54 to 120061.54. Due to the large variance in the data, these results cannot be accurately interpreted.

Table 14 Descriptive Statistics for Plan and Income

	PlanOrNot	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of the Mean
Income	1.00	40	94400	66471	10509
	.00	4	42750	32612	16306

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the schools and the economic status or income of those student-athletes. The independent variable, the school number, includes four levels: DI A, DI B, DII A, DII B to represent each of the institutions surveyed. The dependent variable was the income reported by each subject. The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(4, 39) = .828$ ,  $p = .516$ . There was no significant difference between the means to show a relationship. One school of subjects failed to report their incomes along with many other subjects. This could have had an influence on the findings. The range of the reported incomes was quite wide, ranging from \$1,000 to \$300,000. The income reported did not affect the student-athlete from developing a future plan ( $M = 94400$ ,  $SD = 66471.05$ ) outside

of competitive athletics compared those not having a developed future plan ( $M = 42750$ ,  $SD = 32612.63$ ). Due to the wide range of incomes reported, these results were not usable.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five presents a summary of the study, the major findings of the data analysis, and recommendations to be made for further study in this area. Conclusions were also made according to the data obtained and the results of the study.

#### **Introduction to the Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to identify if current student-athletes have a plan in place for when collegiate athletics has ended and who they feel should provide information about this process. Five research questions were asked and answered by the survey. The research in the area of the sport retirement process is limited and usually focuses on the person recalling on past events. This study asked questions of current student-athletes about their future plans once collegiate athletics are over for them. This study was designed to determine if current collegiate athletes have a developed plan for their future career. The study provided perspective as to who the current student-athletes felt should provide information about and guidance through the sport retirement process. College is designed to prepare students for a future career so this study was designed to determine if collegiate athletes are attending college for a future career education. Collegiate sport can terminate at any time during one's career, so the student-athlete should be prepared with a real world career.

The instrumentation used in this study was a combination of an originally-designed survey, demographic and economic questions, a modified Motives for Physical Activities Measure – Revised (MPAM-R), a modified Student Athletes’ Motivation Towards Sports and Academics Questionnaire (SAMSAQ), and a modified Athletes’ Retirement Decision Inventory (ARDI) questionnaire. These were designed to investigate sport participation and sport retirement feelings. Two hundred thirty-two completed and usable surveys were collected from the four Midwestern NCAA universities of Division I and Division II status. All surveys were returned and portions were used to analyze the current student-athlete feelings about having a developed plan for post collegiate athletics. By visiting the institutions, the researcher obtained a good response rate and the participants were allowed ample time to complete the survey.

### **Overview of the Literature Review**

Sport retirement occurs with all collegiate student-athletes and may not always be planned. This is why it is important for a student-athlete to have a specific career plan formulated prior to the retirement process. Since collegiate athletics is a multi-year and multi-season sport, athletic retirement or termination can be a source of stress for a student-athlete (Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupanic, 2004; McPherson, 1984). Sport retirement can either be voluntary – one chooses to leave his/her sport – or involuntary – one is forced to leave his/her sport (Baillie, 1993). Having direction for the sport retirement process may ease the transition process and give the student-athlete something to look forward to in the future.

One’s motivation for sport participation may affect the transition process into life without sanctioned competitive athletics. A student-athlete with a high athletic identity may have a more difficult time adjusting to a life without the benefits collegiate athletics provides (Pearson &

Petitpas, 1990). Some benefits of collegiate athletics could include having an increase in socio-economic status, being known for the athletic accomplishments, having schooling paid, having a close social support, and receiving special help in academics (DiCamilli, 2000). Along with the adjustments from collegiate athletics is the forming of a new social role and the life adjustments such as the psychological, interpersonal, and financial realms (Lavallee & Anderson, 2000; Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001). Stambulova, Stephan, and Japhag (2007) suggested that when athletic retirement occurs, the student-athlete transitions from who he/she is at that moment to who he/she is going to be in the future career world. This can sometimes be a quick process so the student-athlete is not prepared to enter the career workforce and leave sanctioned athletics. An athlete who is highly motivated to participate in athletics is more likely to have a negative transition due to his/her lack of interest to plan for a life outside of that competitive sport (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). An athlete with a high athletic identity may have a difficult time with the sport retirement transition because of not being able to become career-oriented (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). When an athlete retires, he/she must form a new self-identity and re-establish himself/herself in a new world (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). Blann (1985) found that a student-athlete with a high athletic identity were less likely to plan for a future outside of collegiate athletics than an athlete who participates in collegiate athletics for academic means. When an athlete transitions out of the competition realm, he/she must form a new social role, self-identity, body image and a new direction of activity (Brady, 1988; Tamasne, 1976; Kleiber & Greendorter, 1983; Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007; Wolff & Lester, 1989).

For a positive transition into sport retirement, the athlete may be better prepared with the help of an educational program or guidance. Brady (1988) reported that family and friends can



be a source of emotional support. Kadlick and Flemr (2008) suggested that student-athletes who sought assistance from friend, coaches or life partners had a positive transition into life without competing in competitive athletics. Common coping strategies used for a positive sport retirement transition include keeping in touch with the sport, taking up a new physical activity, learning stress management strategies, and seeking social support (Kadlick & Flemr, 2008). These coping strategies relate to common theories of an athlete retiring from sport including the activity theory, disengagement theory and continuity theory. Through the social learning theory and peer learning theory, a retiring athlete would be able to learn from others in order to gain positive information about the sport retirement process (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). This could also lead to negative information as well if these examples were all that has been exposed to the current student-athlete. Providing positive guidance and education about the sport retirement transition process can lead to a successful entry into the career field for a student-athlete.

Academic institutions may not be aware of the expectations a current student-athlete may have about their responsibilities regarding the athletic retirement process. Current student-athletes may not be aware either of the transition process that is associated with leaving one's competitive sport. Educational guidance programs are available to the academic institutions and student-athletes. Some of these common programs include the "Career Jump Program," the "Making the Jump Program," and the "Life Development Program" (Danish & D'Augelli, 1983; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The United Kingdom and Sweden each stress careers for post sport competition and have educational programs publically available for the athletes in order to prepare them for life after the competitive sport (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007; Torregrosa, Boixados, & Cruz, 2004). In France, athletes are encouraged to combine their sport with a professional career (Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007). Current student-athletes and

academic institutions may not be aware of the educational programs available, so more awareness should be designed about these programs.

Sport retirement is a transition process in an athlete's life that can be a source of stress. This process can either be positive or negative depending on the impact made in society (Stankovich, 1998). Guidance and education through the transition process can help student-athletes to have a positive impact on society. Academic institutions should be made aware of the expectations of the current student-athletes for guidance into this process. The institutions and student-athletes should also be made aware of the programs available for this transition process. This study was designed to promote awareness about the sport retirement process and the education available to governing bodies.

### **Review of the Major Findings**

The majority of the current student-athletes were found to have a developed plan for life outside of sanctioned competitive athletics, which supported the findings of Stankovich, Meeker, and Henderson (2001). However, 15% still did report not having a developed plan for when their college athletic careers are finished. Since that ending time can be uncertain, these student-athletes should be prepared for this transition. Erpic, Wylleman, and Zupancic (2002) found that 26% of athletes gave no thought to life after sanctioned athletics. They also found that 39% of athletes do plan for life after athletic competition. These are similar to the results of this study in that 85% of current student-athletes do have a plan for a future career. Thomas and Elmer (1988) suggested that the educational institution has a duty or obligation to prepare students for a career path, and this includes student-athletes. While that is suggested, it may be that not every athlete considers the advice or teachings from the university personnel.

In regards to current student-athletes reporting being prepared for sport retirement by having a developed career or future plan in relation to Research Question One, the majority of the subjects did have a future plan. A small percentage of the respondents were not prepared for life without sanctioned collegiate athletics. The results of this study were similar to those of Grove, Lavellee, Gordon, and Harvey (1998) and Stankovich, Meeker, and Henderson (2001) in that a small percentage of participants surveyed were not prepared for life post sport competition. The student-athletes who do not have a plan for life after competitive sport are at risk for a negative transition process. The percentage of participants who reported not being prepared for sport retirement have a greater chance of experiencing a negative transition process than those who have a plan (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Wylleman et al. (1993) stated that those who plan for a career after competitive sport have something to look forward to in the future and may have a positive transition into life after competitive athletics. According to that finding, the majority of the participants in this study reporting of having a developed plan fall into that category. Miller (1997) found that two thirds of athletes experience a negative sport retirement transition, which is similar to the results of this present study. Fender (1988) found that athletes who are prepared for life after sport competition have an easier transition process, which could be true for the majority of the participants in this study.

The second part of Research Question One was to determine if current student-athletes felt that the institution should provide guidance or information about the transition process. The results demonstrated that the majority of these student-athletes did not feel that the information about the sport retirement process should solely come from the institution. Family and teammates (current and past) were also listed as sources of the information. Thomas and Ermler (1988) also suggested this since the student-athlete spends much time around these influential

people. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) found that guidance should be provided to student-athletes into the sport retirement process to help with the transition process and the planning of a future outside of sanctioned athletics. The results of this study demonstrated these should come from the coach or athletic department as a whole and not just the academic side of an institution. This is consistent with the findings of Ryska, Hohensee, Cooley, and Jones (2002) since these are the people in daily contact with the athlete and who he/she respects. Brooks, Etzel, and Ostrow (1987) suggested that athletic advisors could best provide the necessary guidance for the collegiate student-athletes. This study also agreed with Schlossberg's (1984) findings that athletes feel the institution should assist with the guidance into sport retirement.

In Research Question Two, an independent samples *t* test results were used to determine if an athlete's relationship (positive or negative) with his/her coach has an effect on him/her formulating a future or career plan. The athlete's relationship did not have an impact on the athlete developing a future or career plan for themselves. Since some athletes do not agree with or personally like his/her coach, it does not appear the relationship will hurt his/her future outside of athletics. Also, a coach who was not supportive of a student-athlete does not appear to hinder that athlete from developing a career plan. The relationship with one's coach either positive or negative does not appear to affect an athlete from having a future plan. The student-athlete should be able to develop a future career plan independent of the relationship with his/her coach. Baillie and Danish (1992) and Shaffer (1991) reported that an athlete's relationship with one's coach should not affect the sport retirement transition process since the coach is busy formulating ways to win and not about the sport retirement phase of a student-athlete's life. A student-athlete may postpone planning for the future because of the separation from his/her comfort zone (Sadewater, 1991). The coach is part of the comfort zone for the athlete since

he/she can relate to him/her regarding the same passion of sport and is in contact with this person daily. Even though the athlete may not have a good relationship with his/her coach, the student-athlete still needs to plan for the future in order to have a positive transition process. According to the social learning theory, athletes are able to learn the retirement behavior from the coach and society he/she is associated (Delaney & Madigan, 2009). The coach can have a positive influence on the student-athlete by providing a good role model for life after competitive sport.

In regards to Research Question Three, the motivation for why one participates in collegiate sport was analyzed to determine if it had a relationship as to the athlete having a future plan outside of sanctioned collegiate athletics. Student-athletes who reported that participating in sport for academic reasons tended to have a developed future plan for life after collegiate athletics. Students reported the main reason they participated in collegiate sport was to gain an education. This was expected since in Research Question One, the majority of student-athletes responding to the survey reported having a developed future career plan. Since collegiate institutions offer athletic scholarships, for many although not all athletes, schooling is paid for while participating in a sport. Students use sport as a means to an education and a career. Current student-athletes also reported participating in collegiate athletics because of the social aspect. Many of the athletes reported having close friends in the athletic department due to their similar interests. Typically, the athletes reported sharing similar experiences and interests making a bond leading to a friendship. As Erpic, Wylleman, and Zupancic (2002) reported, collegiate student-athletes who participate in sanctioned sports for academic or as a means to an education have an easier time adjusting to life without the competition. A positive transition into sport retirement is related to the coping mechanisms one uses or is guided towards in the process (Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001). As suggested by these researchers, the coping mechanisms are

related to the reasons why one participates in athletics. Chartrand and Lent (1987) stated that the behavior and motivation for which one participates in athletics has an effect on the type of sport retirement transition one may experience. As found in this study, the majority of students participate in athletics as a means to gain an education. These student-athletes typically had a career or future plan in place prior to sport retirement and my experience a positive transition process.

In regards to Research Question Four, frequencies were used to determine who the current student-athletes felt information about the sport retirement process should come from. The coach was reported as the main source of where the information should come from. A smaller percentage reported that one's own family should help provide the information and guidance. An even smaller percentage reported that sports medicine professionals should be the ones to give the information about the retirement process. The athletic department as a whole had the high ranking as the main source of who should provide the information. The academic department as a whole had a high second ranking behind the athletic department as being the source of the information as felt by the students. Current student-athletes felt that the department they spend the majority of their college time in should be the one to help them with their future career plans. This variety of responses supported the findings from Stambulova, Stephan, and Japhag (2007) when they found that current student-athletes were not concerned about the source of support but that they did receive the information. These findings are consistent to those from Ryska, Hohensee, Cooley, and Jones (2002) that the coach is believed by current student-athletes that he/she could provide successful sport retirement guidance. Unlike the studies by Brady (1988) and Kadlick and Flemr (2008) who suggested that family and friends could be the main source of guidance, the participants in this study felt others were more informative. Taylor and

Ogilvie (2001) suggested that counseling would be the optimal source for sport retirement information, yet the participants in this study ranked professional help as a low source. The student-athletes surveyed in this study may not be aware of the counseling programs available nationwide to help current student-athletes in the transition process. The awareness of these programs by either the NCAA or academic institution could help with this knowledge.

In regards to Research Question Five, an independent samples *t* test was used to determine if the financial status of a student-athlete affects the person on their likeliness to have a developed plan for life after sanctioned college athletics. Due to the low number of respondents on this question, the results had a high standard deviation and therefore, may not be reliable. Possible reasons for the low response rate include being uncomfortable with answering the question, not knowing the answer, not understanding the question, or not seeing the question on the survey. No statistically significant relationship was found between a current student-athlete's economic status and having a developed career plan already. Even between the different schools, no relationship was found between one's economic status and having a career plan. Wolff and Lester (1989) and Nimrod (2007) found that athletes had to adjust to a new lifestyle including social and economic once sanctioned athletes has terminated. Delaney and Madigan (2009) found that one may participate in collegiate athletes to achieve a higher socio-economic status and therefore, may have a negative transition into sport retirement for a fear of losing that new level of achievement. As stated by these authors, this fear could also be associated with leaving an easier life than the athlete once had prior to the gain in financial status.

Based on the results of this study and previous literature, it can be inferred that having awareness about the sport retirement process by academic institution personnel can lead to an education about the process and therefore a positive transition process for an athlete. The

institution may not be aware of the need for guidance into the sport retirement phase of a student-athlete's life. Based on previous literature and the findings of this study, this should change so a student-athlete may not only graduate but have a positive impact in society and the career world. The NCAA could also aid in this awareness and help guide institutions with sport retirement information or focus not only on the graduation of the student-athlete but having a career plan as well. Since a collegiate athlete retires earlier than a career workforce individual, earlier planning is necessary for a positive transition into the career field (Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006). As suggested by Stambulova, Stephan, and Japhag (2007), strategies to facilitate a positive retirement process include self-knowledge, skills, motivation, and methods of social and financial support. These are the types of support the student-athlete may need to plan for his/her future outside of competitive athletics.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The majority of the current student-athletes had a career plan for when collegiate athletics is over already. This means that current student-athletes at the college level were ready for when their college competition days would be finished. Since the percentage is not 100 percent, it indicates that not every student-athlete is prepared for a career life after college athletics and therefore, may have a negative transition. Tate (1993) reported that by having a thought-out life plan results in a positive transition, where he/she will make a positive impact on society.

It was also noted that the current student-athlete prefers the coach to help guide and provide information about the sport retirement process. In regards to departments at the institution, the athletic department as a whole the coach included were reported by the students as to who should be the main source of helping the student-athletes with this transition process



and career development. This was followed by the academic departments of the institution as to who should present the information to the students. This information could be presented to the student-athlete during each year of competition since sport retirement process can occur at any time in an athletic career (Kadlick & Flemr, 2008). Also, the information could be presented in the form of guest speakers, pamphlets, online resources, and one-on-one advising. Shmerler (2002) had shown that these are appropriate methods to present the information. The athletic department should be current with the information to meet the needs of all the current student-athletes. In order for all of the collegiate student-athletes to have an opportunity for a positive sport retirement transition process, they should be educated about the importance of having a career plan since competitive athletics will eventually end.

### **Implications of Study**

Academic institutions have different departments that cater to the many different groups on the campus. The athletic department may not realize that they have an educational responsibility since the student population involved is still growing and developing mentally. These students need guidance, like those in other departments of the institution. Athletic departments not only provide a service to the students for training and competition, but for career guidance as well. It has been found in this study that current student athletes feel that career education should come from the athletic department as a whole. This could be because the athletes spend much of their college experience in the athletic department practicing and competing. Some athletic teams offer study hall hours so they recognize the importance of grades in one's education, but they need to include career preparation too. Athletic departments should become more prepared to educate student-athletes regarding a career life outside of

sanctioned athletics. This will help the student-athlete to have a more positive transition process and be happier in life (Brooks, Etzel, & Ostrow, 1987).

### **Implications for Future Research**

Based on the research findings reported from this study, it is believed that more information on the sport retirement process for collegiate athletes is needed in order to draw more educational conclusions. Although the data derived from the survey used in this study can be beneficial to university institutions greater application would result from a broader base of data regarding the type of education that could be provided. Future research studies that involve current student-athletes' is necessary to further investigate their opinions about the type of education is needed from the athletic department in order to be better prepared for a career after sanctioned athletics. Due to the income question in this study being flawed, future research could focus on clearer income questions to determine if one's socioeconomic status affects having a plan for post collegiate sport competition. Future research could also be useful by reviewing the perceptions of past student-athletes about the type of education the athletic department should provide relative to developing a career plan and the importance of having such a plan early in a college athletic career.

### **Summary of Discussion**

It was the intent of this research to investigate if current student-athletes are prepared for life after competitive collegiate athletics, and who should provide this necessary information to them. The results revealed that current student-athletes do have a developed career plan. Through the statistical analysis, it was also found that the current student-athletes felt that the university

athletic department should provide the sport retirement process education and that the coach should be involved in this education. Due to the low response rate of the economic status question on the survey, no clear relationship could be determined between income and career planning. Current student-athlete thoughts about their career planning resources were a reliable source of preventative information for the academic institution regarding the sport retirement process. The information from this research study can help universities better recognize what the student-athletes expect in an education from the athletic department about life after sanctioned athletics. This can help institutions prepare their athletic departments, including personnel, for this educational component. Student-athletes provide a service to the athletic department of the institution and in return do expect an education outside of the textbooks about career planning and options. By educating and preparing the student-athletes to succeed in life, the institution develops a sense of pride and increased success rates for its graduates. It is important for everyone to know that family, coaches, school personnel, and student-athletes are all in this together for a common goal: to achieve a quality preparation and education that is designed to meet the individual needs of the student-athletes for a successful transition into sport retirement. Not every athlete will go into professional athletics, so it is important for him/her to have a career and life plan.

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APPENDIX A  
SURVEY

**Survey**

1. What collegiate sport(s) do you participate in? Check all that apply.

- Track and Field/Cross Country
- Wrestling
- Basketball
- Soccer
- Football
- Swimming/Diving

Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you on a sport scholarship?

- Yes
- No

3. What participation level do you compete at?

- Regular Starter
- Not Play/Not Travel Often
- Regular Substitute

4. What year of athletic competition are you?

- Redshirt Freshman
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- 5<sup>th</sup> year senior

5. What academic year in college are you?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- 5<sup>th</sup> year Senior
- Graduate Level

6. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your gender?  Male  Female

8. Please indicate your race.  Caucasian  African American

Native American  Hispanic  Other

9. What is your current work status?

- Full-time
- Part-time (including work-study)
- Not employed



10. Do you consider your athletic scholarship as your primary means of paying for college?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

11. If you are not the primary source of financial support (i.e. spouse, parents, guardian), what is the annual income?

\_\_\_\_\_

## General Attitude Survey

Use the following scale. Please indicate your feeling to the following statements.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = neutral

5 = slightly agree 6 = agree 7 = strongly agree

1. I feel like I have a positive attitude/relationship with my coach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I am comfortable talking with my coach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I rarely have negative thoughts about my coach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. My coach knows my future plans after I leave my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I feel coaches should provide guidance about planning for life after competitive athletics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I feel my academic advisor should provide guidance about planning for life after competitive athletics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I feel the athletic director should provide guidance about planning for life after competitive athletics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I feel a professional within the athletic department should provide guidance about planning for life after my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I feel a professional within the academic department should provide guidance about planning for life after my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I feel it will be difficult to leave my collegiate sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I have a future plan after I stop competing in my collegiate sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Rank the following as to their importance for providing information regarding your transition into your post sport career. 1 being most important and 5 being least important.

\_\_\_\_\_ Coach

\_\_\_\_\_ Athletic Director

\_\_\_\_\_ Academic Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_ Sports Medicine Staff

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**MPAM-R: Ryan, Frederick, Lepas, Rubio, & Sheldon, 1997**

Use the following scale to rank the following:

1                  2                  3                  4                  5                  6                  7

Not at all true for me Very true for me

I participate in organized collegiate athletics:

1. Because I want to be physically fit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Because it is fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Because I like engaging activities which physically challenge me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Because I want to obtain new skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Because I want to look or maintain weight so I look better	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Because I want to be with my friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Because I like to do this activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Because I want to improve existing skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Because I like the challenge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Because I want to define my muscles to look better	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Because it makes me happy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Because I want to keep up my current skill level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Because I want to have more energy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Because I like activities that are physically challenging	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Because I like to be with others who are interested in this activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



**SAMSAQ: Gaston-Gayles, 2005**

Use the following scale to rank the following statements. 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree  
3 = slightly disagree 4 = neutral 5 = slightly agree 6 = agree 7 = strongly agree

1. I am confident that I can achieve a high grade point average this year (3.0 or above)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Achieving a high level of performance in my sport is an important goal for me this year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. It is important for me to learn what is taught in my courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I am willing to put in the time to earn excellent grades in my courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. The most important reason why I am in school is to play my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. The amount of work required in my courses interferes with my athletic goals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I will be able to use what is taught in my courses in different aspects of my life outside of school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I chose to play my sport because it is something that I am interested in as a career	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I have some doubt about my ability to be a star athlete in my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I chose my college major because it is something that I am interested in as a career	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Earning a high grade point average (3.0 or above) is not an important goal for me this year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. It is important to me to learn the skills and strategies taught by my coaches	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. It is important for me to do better than other athletes in my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. The time I spend engaged in my sport is enjoyable to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. It is worth the effort to be an exceptional athlete in my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Participation in my sport interferes with my progress towards completing my education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Use the following scale to rank the following statements.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = neutral

5 = slightly agree 6 = agree 7 = strongly agree

17. I get more satisfaction from earning an "A" in a course than winning in my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. During the years I compete in my sport, completing a college degree is not a goal for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I am confident that I can be a star performer in my sport this year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. My goal is to make it to the professional level or the Olympics in my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I have some doubt about my ability to earn high grades in some of my courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I am confident that I can make it to an elite level in my sport (professional or Olympics)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I am confident that I can earn a college degree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I will be able to use the skills I learn in my sport in other areas of my life outside of sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I get more satisfaction from winning in my sport than from getting an "A" in a course	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. It is not important for me to perform better than other students in my courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I am willing to put in the time to be outstanding in my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. The content of most of my courses is interesting to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. The most important reason why I am in school is to earn a degree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. It is not worth the effort to earn excellent grades in my courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**ARDI-R: Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouquereau, 2006**

Use the following scale to rank the following statements. 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree  
3 = slightly disagree 4 = neutral 5 = slightly agree 6 = agree 7 = strongly agree

1. I'm afraid of changes caused by ending my sport career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I'm afraid of not being able to adapt to a career or job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I do not consider my sport experience to be transferrable to another job environment – I am not gaining any skills to help in a job environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I am afraid of not being supported by my teammates after I stop competing in my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I feel it will be difficult to start from scratch when I leave my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I am afraid of being depressed after leaving my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I am afraid of losing some friends once my sport career ends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I am afraid of no longer having contact with the people associated with my sport after I leave	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I am afraid of not having the required skills to begin a new professional life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I am afraid of having to relearn how to deal with everyday life after leaving my competitive sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I am worried at no longer benefiting (financially, education, friends, etc) from my sports environment after leaving my competitive sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I am afraid of feeling useless without my competitive sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I am afraid of not being able to be financially self-sufficient after leaving my sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Upon leaving my competitive sport, I am afraid of ending up in a routine job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



Use the following scale to rank the following statements.

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = slightly disagree 4 = neutral

5 = slightly agree 6 = agree 7 = strongly agree

15. I am afraid of letting myself go physically after ending my sports career	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I can develop new vocational skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I can set new professional targets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I can be satisfied with non-sport related projects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I can have a more regular routine outside of my competitive sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I can have a more creative job once my sport career is finished	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I can follow vocational retraining after leaving my competitive sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I can prove that I am able to do other things after leaving my competitive sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I can spend time on other interests upon completion of my competitive sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I can change my lifestyle when my competitive sport is finished	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I can manage my private life better when my competitive sport career is done	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I can have a more serene life after leaving my competitive sport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I will have more time to devote to myself after my competitive sports career ends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM

## Participant Consent Letter

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student at UTC, completing my doctorate degree in the EDD Learning and Leadership under the supervision of Dr. Bernard, Dr. Weathington, Dr. Tucker, and Dr. Colston. I am examining student athlete attitudes about sport retirement. I am requesting your participation in my study by completing the attached survey (about 10 minutes of your time).

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may discontinue your participation at any point without penalty. If you choose to participate, please complete the attached survey and place it in the envelope provided to be mailed back to researcher. The survey is completely anonymous. Although the findings may be published, the school name will not be used, and no one reading the results of the research will be able to identify you. No personal identifying information will be taken. If you wish to not participate in this study you may discard this survey. There are no risks or personal benefits to you as a participant. Thank you for your time!

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at [bleffler@graceland.edu](mailto:bleffler@graceland.edu) or Dr. Hinsdale Bernard (Co-Chairman of Committee) at [Hinsdale-bernard@utc.edu](mailto:Hinsdale-bernard@utc.edu) or Dr. Bart Weathington (Co-Chairman of Committee, Chairperson of UTC's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human subjects) at [Bart-weathington@utc.edu](mailto:Bart-weathington@utc.edu) (425-425-4289).

Sincerely,

Brandy Leffler, ABD, ATC

Participant Consent Action:

**By completing the survey, I agree to participate in this research.**

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA. The Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (FWA00004149) has approved this research project # 11-135.

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL PAGE

**MEMORANDUM**

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TO: Brandy Leffler  
Dr. Hinsdale Bernard IRB # 11-135

FROM: Lindsay Pardue, Director of Research Integrity  
Dr. Bart Weathington, IRB Committee Chair

DATE: September 15, 2011

SUBJECT: IRB # 11-135: Perceptions of Sport Retirement by Current Student-Athletes

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your application and assigned you the IRB number listed above. You must include the following approval statement on research materials seen by participants and used in research reports:

***The Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (FWA00004149) has approved this research project # 11-135.***

Please remember that you must complete a Certification for Changes, Annual Review, or Project Termination/Completion Form when the project is completed or provide an annual report if the project takes over one year to complete. The IRB Committee will make every effort to remind you prior to your anniversary date; however, it is your responsibility to ensure that this additional step is satisfied.

Please remember to contact the IRB Committee immediately and submit a new project proposal for review if significant changes occur in your research design or in any instruments used in conducting the study. You should also contact the IRB Committee immediately if you encounter any adverse effects during your project that pose a risk to your subjects.

For any additional information, please consult our web page <http://www.utc.edu/irb> or email [instrb@utc.edu](mailto:instrb@utc.edu)

Best wishes for a successful research project.

## VITA

Brandy Leffler was born in Lincoln City, Oregon. Her parents are Bill and Karen Leffler of Brashear, Missouri. She has an older brother, Monty Platz, who resides in Columbia, Missouri with his wife. Brandy attended Brashear High School in Brashear, Missouri. Brandy went on to attend Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri where she competed on the Cross Country/Track and Field teams. At Truman State University, she completed her Bachelor's of Science degree in Exercise Science. She then attended the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas and obtained a Master of Science degree in Kinesiology. After working as an Athletic Trainer and Adjunct Instructor for a few years, Brandy accepted a position at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, where she completed her Doctorate of Education degree in Learning and Leadership in August 2012. Brandy is currently employed as a professor at Graceland University. She currently resides in Bethany, Missouri with her fiancé Heath Schneider. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends.