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The Dynamics of Transition from High Performance Sport

by

Dana A. Sinclair

**A thesis
submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Education**

University of Ottawa, 1990

 Dana A. Sinclair, Ottawa, Canada, 1990



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine and explore the transition experiences of Canada's high performance athletes within Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) theoretical framework to determine the predisposing factors and effects of the transition process. More specifically, this study investigated the reasons for retirement, the individual coping strategies and support networks used by transitional athletes, as well as other variables that may have impacted on the athlete's adjustment process. This study provided an alternative, comprehensive perspective from which to examine retirement from high performance sport. Retired high performance athletes (N=199) with international competitive experience completed the Athlete Retirement Questionnaire, a 34-item instrument developed for this study. Multivariate analyses revealed that planned retirement led to smoother adjustment than unplanned retirement. Loglinear analyses indicated that positive adjustment was also related to those transitions which caused the least disruption in the lives of the athletes. Chi-square analyses showed that those athletes who adjusted smoothly tended to retire after they had achieved their sport related goals or because they had achieved their goals in sport. Athletes who were more dissatisfied with their transition tended to feel incompetent outside of sport and tended to feel that keeping busy was not an effective coping strategy. Charner and Schlossberg's transitional framework received support in terms of overall fit, and provided direction for practical intervention suggestions. Finally, this study suggests that adjustment to retirement from high performance sport may not be as distressing or problematic for as many national team athletes as previously thought.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Transitions are inevitable and often unpredictable. Human life is characterized by these various life changes, discontinuities, or turning points (George, 1980; Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989). Transitional events include career changes, the death of a spouse, having children, moving to another city, or getting married. Every transition has the potential to be a crisis, a relief, or a combination of both, depending on the individual's perception of the situation.

One particular type of transition which has the potential to illuminate these complex patterns of change and stability is retirement from high performance sport. The event of retirement, or change, is a normal consequence of elite participation. A career in sport is much shorter than most other careers or occupations, as most athletes retire, voluntarily or involuntarily, during their mid- to late 20's. All athletes, whether they compete internationally or professionally, must eventually move from elite participation in sport into another major focus area. This "second" career often requires entirely different skills than those learned and perfected as an athlete and is one in which the individual rarely has the same competencies. Consequently, this transition, at a relatively young age, is often said to engender identity crises and coping difficulties.

Any transition, whether smooth or rough, necessitates a degree of adjustment (Coakley, 1983). What becomes of athletes upon their exit from high performance sport? Do they leave sport content with their memories of participation and enthusiastic about the new challenges that await them? Is retirement an event which allows the pursuit of other opportunities, or does it lead to negative outcomes such as unhappiness, addictions, and identity crises? What internal and external resources do athletes bring to the transition

process, and how do these resources or characteristics relate to adaptive success and adaptive failure? In short, how do individuals experience sport retirement?

In recent years, interest and concern regarding the athletic transition process has grown considerably, yet much of the documented information is anecdotal and journalistic in nature (Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Researchers, however, have finally begun to examine the effects of withdrawal from a sport role, and the subsequent resocialization into alternative roles (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Coakley, 1983; McPherson, 1984).

Despite the interest now being generated in this area of sport, the literature has not identified a consolidating theoretical framework from which to study athletic transition. Several perspectives, notably social gerontology and thanatology, have been empirically tested but have not been effective in drawing out the antecedents and consequences associated with athletic transition.

Interestingly, much of the existing research has focussed on the theoretical perspective of social gerontology as past research has assumed that sport retirement and occupational retirement are similar (Ball, 1976; Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Lerch, 1981, 1984; Rosenberg, 1981a, 1984). This similarity stems from the notion that one's chronological age "forces" withdrawal from a slot in the labor force (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985) and renders the individual, in any context or at any age or stage in life, "post-productive".

Although it has been documented that former athletes experience adjustment difficulties similar to retirees from the work force in terms of status degradation, downward mobility, identity crisis, and loss of sense of purpose (Ball, 1976), the gerontological framework is suspect in its' application to athletic transition.

Gerontological perspectives deal with aging and old age (Rosenberg, 1981a). Although aging does play a role in some cases of athletic retirement, the extent to which an analogy between sport retirement and occupational or age-induced retirement can be made is definitely questionable. Clearly, the high performance athlete at the end of his/her career

is far younger chronologically and biologically than his/her working career counterpart. Upon retirement, athletes still have thirty to forty years to be employable.

Similarly, thanatology, the study of death and dying, represents another questionable conceptual perspective used to study athletic retirement. This framework views the exit from sport as a form of "social death" where the athlete is ostracized and isolated due to his/her loss of status. Undoubtedly, some athletes do encounter trauma and devastation following the relinquishment of their primary role in sport and must face a period of loss. Yet, whether or not this scenario is applicable to the overwhelming majority of athletes is questionable.

It is evident then, that although social gerontology and thanatology offer a limited conceptual perspective from which to examine athletic transition, neither provide a systematic, effective basis for a comprehensive discussion of the antecedents and consequences engendered by the transition process.

There are other areas of conceptual concern in the literature as well, as much of the empirical research examining the dynamics of athletic transition is grounded in a "crisis" or "relief" orientation. Much of the literature describing the transition process from high performance sport has emphasized a crisis orientation. That is, the post-active days of athletes have been portrayed as traumatic and negative (Harris & Eitzen, 1971; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986), as well as dysfunctional in terms of emotional or psychological disorders which can become manifest in behaviors like alcohol or drug addiction (Hill & Lowe, 1974; McPherson, 1977; McPherson, 1980; Mihovilovic, 1968). Werthner and Orlick (1986), in their study of high performance amateur athletes, found that the majority of these athletes encountered some degree of difficulty in leaving their sport careers.

McPherson (1984) states, with insight, that this problem oriented perspective must be replaced by a process oriented approach. Too frequently athletic transition has been looked at as an event that automatically causes trauma rather than as initiating a transitional process that each individual perceives differently and therefore adjusts to differently.

In contrast to this crisis orientation, several recent studies have taken a less deterministic view of the retirement process (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Coakley, 1983; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985). These studies imply that there is little evidence to suggest that former athletes face adjustment difficulties, and that athletes may actually experience relief from the pressures and heavy time commitment of sport as a result of their withdrawal. That is, leaving sport may be a pleasantly anticipated event as it allows new opportunities for personal growth and development.

Other factors that may impact on the transition process have not been accounted for in current research. For instance, Blinde and Greendorfer (1985) note that post-retirement sport involvement patterns, the athlete's level of accomplishment, and social structural factors such as ageism, racism, and sexism have been ignored in the research. Consequently, it is not known if these variables are mediating factors in the adjustment process.

The scope of the existing research has been further confounded through the study of limited samples. Most of the studies looking at athletic retirement have focused on the transition experience of the male, professional athlete (usually the baseball or football player), or more recently on the intercollegiate 'student-athlete'. Moreover, the representativeness of many study samples is unstable as the response rates have been low. Even the term "retirement" has been charged as an inappropriate descriptor for the process of leaving the athlete role, as retirement is often involuntary due to injury or conflicts within the athletic association, as opposed to being voluntary and "knowing when to quit".

It is clearly evident then, that the equivocal and limiting nature of the existing research has prevented full exploration of the dynamics of the transition process. In order to broaden the research considerations pertaining to athletic transition, it is now necessary to discuss an alternative framework, namely Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model, for which to ground future research on athletic transition.

Charner and Schlossberg's model (adapted from Schlossberg, 1984) for analyzing human adaptation to transition is a most useful and appropriate departure point from which to examine transitional athletes as they negotiate their changing biographies (Figure 1, page 23). Schlossberg has theorized that three major sets of factors influence the transition process and thus adaptation to transition. These sets of factors are: 1) the characteristics of the transition, 2) the characteristics of the individual, and 3) the characteristics of the environment. This model, as seen in the adult development literature, does not speak directly to the athlete, but highlights variables in adaptation which may have universal application.

In Charner and Schlossberg's model of transitional analysis, perception is important. That is, how people move through a transition can be determined, rather than only discovering if they are relieved or traumatized by the transition. Clearly, any event, despite its' nature, will differ in importance and impact depending on the individual.

Unfortunately, much of the past research on athletic transition has ignored this notion of perception as indicated by the assumptive and mutually exclusive explanations that the individual experiences either crisis or relief upon retiring depending on external variables such as skill level or time commitment (e.g., professional and high performance athletes are more likely to encounter intense transition stress than intercollegiate athletes because professional and high performance athletes tend to view sport as a full-time pursuit rather than a part-time endeavor).

A more accurate picture may be, however, that a multitude of behavioral patterns are associated with athletic transition (Werthner & Orlick, 1986) simply because individuals bring their own perceptions of stress, personal resources, coping strategies, and socialization experiences to their particular transition (George, 1980; Schlossberg, 1981). It is the individual, the resources available to and used by that individual, and the type of transition encountered, which mediates adaptive success or failure. Clearly, more research is needed to identify the conditions and characteristics associated with these individual

patterns and perceptions (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Coakley, 1983; McPherson, 1984; Rosenberg, 1980) to discover why some athletes negotiate the challenges of change successfully, while others fail to take them in stride.

The purpose of this study is to examine and explore the transition experiences of Canada's high performance athletes within Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) theoretical framework in the attempt to distinguish the predisposing factors and effects of the transition process. More specifically, this study will investigate the reasons for retirement, the individual coping strategies and the support networks used by transitional athletes, as well as other variables that may impact on an athlete's adjustment process. It is anticipated that this research will also provide an alternative, more comprehensive perspective from which to examine transitional adaptation to sport retirement.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In recent years, the retirement process has been described as a termination which engenders social psychological adjustment (George, 1980; Schlossberg, 1984). Botterill (1988) states that transition adjustment is a serious problem for many athletes and that the demands of pursuing excellence in any field, but especially in sport, can lead to these problems.

There is, however, confusion surrounding the dynamics of the athletic transition process. This confusion is largely due to the paucity and atheoretical nature of the existing research. Even the theoretically grounded research is confounding due to the production of equivocal results and the lack of a consolidating, useful framework with which to guide inquiry into the athletic transition process.

Therefore, to enhance the clarity of the following discussion, the review will be structured in accordance with athlete population categories. That is, research conducted on the professional athlete population will be addressed prior to the intercollegiate and high performance athlete populations respectively. The final area of review will be that of the adult development literature and its relevance to the investigation of the athletic transition process.

Professional Athlete Research

Regarding professional sport, Sussman (1972) stated that retirement was not a problem as athletes were not only guaranteed second careers at the end of their sport career, but were also aware of the brevity of their sport careers and thus prepared for the transition. Coakley (1983) takes issue with these comments by stating that Sussman's conclusions were based on "popular misconceptions" and thus did not depict the transition process accurately. Coakley (1983) further notes that many athletes do encounter, and have difficulty coping with, retirement-induced stress. In short, the experiences of former athletes cannot be "collectively characterized as either glorious or disastrous" (p. 6).

Such conflicting viewpoints are supported throughout the literature. For instance, McPherson (1978) concluded that the majority of professional athletes adjusted successfully to retirement but their second careers may not be as rewarding psychologically or economically. In a 1958 survey of former major league baseball players, Haerle (1975) reported that retirement did cause some disruption in the life of the athlete but that the overall transition engendered successful patterns of coping with the disruption.

Arviko (1976) and Lerch (1982) reported findings similar to those of Haerle. Both studies, drawing on gerontological theory, analyzed the post-playing adjustments of professional baseball players. Arviko concluded that most respondents reported relatively high levels of adjustment. Lerch concluded that "the stereotype of the downtrodden ex-ballplayer who is extremely dissatisfied with life does not hold up under close scrutiny" yet indicated that some respondents "took some time to adjust" and also felt that more could be done by the baseball establishment to help ease the transition process. It must be noted that the survey response rates of these two studies were low (38% and 45%) which brings into question the representativeness of the samples used.

Other studies have emphasized the adjustment problems associated with the transition process. For example, Hill and Lowe (1974) concluded that retirement from professional

sport is a negative event in that the retiree will face an identity crisis, a loss of status, a reduction in income, the need for new skills, and new roles. Similarly, Ogilvie and Howe (1986) stated that each athlete faces a period of adjustment during the transition to ex-athlete. They also proposed that the process of transition follows a predictable course consisting of stages: shock and numbness, denial, anger and resentment, and depression. Rosenberg (1981b), in his study of major league baseball players, concludes that "with the exception of former stars whose very names have value, the retired athlete - especially the retired minority athlete - finds himself in a business world for which he is often ill-prepared and which could hardly care less about his former meal-ticket and door-opener, the status of professional athlete" (p.7).

Studies by Weinberg and Arond (1952) and Hare (1971) on the post-retirement careers of boxers also concluded that athletes experience adjustment difficulties. Weinberg and Arond traced the experiences of 95 ex-champions and leading contenders. They found that retirement brought on emotional problems due to trying to find and maintain alternative employment, and to a dramatic decrease in status, prestige, and income. Most of the problems appeared to be associated with injuries, a previous dependence on managers, and exorbitant spending habits continuing from their active boxing days. Hare asserted that family socioeconomic background and minority status were significant variables in the adjustment process in that poor financial resources of low income families and job discrimination further exacerbated transition adjustments.

Reynolds (1981) conducted a similar study of retired National Football League players. The results showed that sport variables (e.g. career length, fame, voluntary vs. involuntary retirement, off-season job status and time spent in off-season job) did not affect current job status or job satisfaction. Traditional variables (e.g. race, education, and father's occupation) were found to be the major determinants of job status. Reynolds did find, however, that involuntary transition was related to lower self-esteem.

Lerch's (1981) study of former professional baseball players' also found no sport variables (e.g., career length, fame, voluntary vs. involuntary retirement, etc...) to be significantly related to the athlete's transition adjustment. Predictors of adjustment were health, current income, education and pre-retirement attitude.

While several studies have examined the professional athlete in transition, most have focussed on either occupational variables (e.g., job status) or adjustment measures (e.g., life satisfaction) (Rosenberg, 1981b). According to Rosenberg, little or no attention has been given to the immediate postcedent of retirement (e.g. the first job after retirement). He feels that "it is here that the athlete's adjustment problems, if he is to suffer any at all, will be most severe." Rosenberg feels it important to know what former athletes did immediately after leaving the competitive realm, not just what they are doing today, and how they feel about it. Unfortunately but interestingly, Rosenberg states that the most meaningful finding in his study on the first job held by former major league baseball players after their last year in the major leagues was that the teams had no information for three-quarters of the 400 cohort members.

The professional athlete literature is significant in that this research has emphasized the importance of specific issues for future research on athletic transition. Two such issues are Rosenberg's (1981b) notion that the postcedent of retirement is salient; and McPherson's (1978) notion that retirement be considered a transition or a status passage. With these two points of emphasis in place, it is however, most imperative to view the event of retirement as initiating a dynamic process of transitional adaptation in order to discover "how" athletes move into a second career, rather than simply finding out that the athlete eventually found employment or not. The ensuing discussion will now focus on research pertaining to the intercollegiate athlete.

Intercollegiate Athlete Research

Recently, Coakley (1983) has argued that the process of retirement, whether in the interscholastic, amateur, or professional context, is not always a source of stress, or a series of identity crises or adjustment difficulties. He states that, although the research is limited, the studies completed on interscholastic and amateur athletes do not support the notion that sport retirement is characteristically traumatic and identity shaking. For instance, in studying 153 former outstanding male high school basketball and football players, Sands (1978) found that the athletes handled their loss of social recognition realistically, and did not appear to go through any trauma or identity crises.

Similarly, at the intercollegiate level, Snyder and Baber (1979) found that, in a comparison of 233 former male athletes with nonathletes who had graduated during the same time period (1965-1975), there was no evidence that athletic transition was problematic. There was no difference between athletes and nonathletes in the levels of satisfaction with friends, marriage, work career, financial situation, or general life style. The former athletes successfully adjusted their interests and activities after leaving college. Dubois (1980) and Sack and Thiel (1979) conclude that former athletes and nonathletes do not differ significantly in their current socioeconomic status. These results indicate that if adjustment difficulties did arise they were not serious enough to cause their occupational patterns to differ from those of their nonathlete counterparts.

Kleiber, Greendorfer, Blinde, and Samdahl (1987), noted that the transition process as experienced by different athletes has not been thoroughly examined. Thus, they looked at the effect of role performance in intercollegiate basketball and football on life satisfaction in the period of adulthood immediately following university. Using Kears's (1986) analysis of "exits" in everyday life and his postulate that the quality of performance in the final phases of a career will influence subsequent well-being, the researchers surveyed 426 former athletes. The athletes were grouped according to whether they had received recognition during their last year (e.g., all-league, honorable mention), whether they had

started most of the games or not, and whether injury had severed their career early. The evidence half supported the quality-of-exit thesis. That is, good endings may not affect subsequent life satisfaction, but bad endings may.

Finally, Greendorfer and Blinde (1985) surveyed 1,123 former intercollegiate male and female athletes and concluded that "there was little evidence to suggest these athletes experienced adjustment difficulties" (p. 101). For example, the post career data from this study indicates that retirement from the active role of athlete did not terminate or mark the end of one's involvement with sport in general. Sport remained an important part in the lives of the majority of these former intercollegiate athletes although the importance of sport declined during the college years.

This shift in interest during a sport career, according to Greendorfer and Blinde (1985) indirectly suggests that sport retirement is more of a process and a transition, rather than an event as previously conceptualized in the literature and may also reflect the "multidimensionality and complexity of the sport retirement process" (p. 107). Some athletes identified feelings of relief upon retiring which brings to light a less deterministic perspective of the retirement process than has been portrayed in past research. Greendorfer and Blinde (1985) state that to date, current perspectives have failed to consider the possibility that the pressures of intercollegiate sport and the heavy time commitment are constraining and that athletes could actually welcome retirement and the new life opportunities accompanying such action.

Research on the intercollegiate athlete strongly suggests that this group, unlike professional athletes, do not experience adjustment difficulties during the transition process. Such conclusions may accurately describe the intercollegiate environment, however, they are not generalizable to the professional and high performance environments. This lack of generalizability across sport settings is due to the significant changes in expectations, demands, and level of expertise as one moves from the broad, more recreational base of the sport feeder system to the narrowing, high performance apex

of the feeder system. That is, professional and high performance athletes tend to view sport as a career. These athletes regard training and competition as a full time pursuit which requires a high degree of commitment in terms of time and personal energy. Therefore, the intercollegiate setting does not provide a rich environment for the efficacious examination of the athletic transition process. The following discussion will outline the research on athletic transition in the high performance setting.

High Performance Athlete Research

The paucity of empirical studies on athletic transition in general and the lack of research studies specifically dealing with former high performance (e.g., international calibre) athletes and female athletes has been noted by many researchers (Coakley, 1983; McPherson, 1984; Werthner & Orlick, 1986).

One of the first to attempt to analyze the possible adjustment problems of retiring athletes was a study of former Yugoslavian soccer players by Mihovilovic (1968). In this study it was revealed that 95% of the athletes retired involuntarily due to illness, injury, family concerns or loss of skill status. Many of those athletes who felt they were "forced out" demonstrated the adjustment problems that gerontologists have associated with involuntary retirees.

In a study of 163 male and female Czechoslovakian athletes from 20 Olympic sports, Svoboda and Vanek (1982) concluded, like Ogilvie and Howe (1986), that retirement stress exists. They stated that retirement from sport is inevitable and that athletes can begin to cope with transition stress by realizing that sport is a short term career, and that one must never sacrifice everything to high performance.

In agreement is Orlick (1980) who, through extensive interactions with numerous high performance athletes, believes that sport may be the commitment of priority while at the

height of one's competitive career, but other pursuits should not be completely negated or relegated to zero. Orlick does point out that those athletes who are able to balance their lives during their athletic careers are most likely the ones who will progress more smoothly through the transition process.

Werthner and Orlick (1986), in their study of 28 of Canada's best male and female amateur athletes who had retired from international competition within the previous ten years, found that the majority of the respondents had encountered some degree of difficulty in the transition out of their sport careers. In addition, several factors that appeared to influence the ease or difficulty of the transition were identified. The factors found to contribute to a smooth transition out of sport were: having a new focus (e.g. a new job, school, or finding religion); feeling a sense of accomplishment (e.g. satisfying goals); having been a part of a positive coaching situation; not being forced to leave sport due to injury, political or sport association problems; having adequate finances; and having the resources of supportive family and friends.

Sport retirement represents a change in life focus or life patterns that can create stress. Orlick and Werthner (1987) suggest that the adjustment process to sport retirement establishes itself in a pattern of "waves". Borgen and Amundson (1987) describe the experience of unemployment in similar terms and suggest that the feelings associated with such a transition are like an "emotional roller coaster". After some time one's emotional cycle or wave pattern, which is individual, will begin to change and "the time you spend in the down part of the wave will become shorter and less intense, a clear indication of progress and positive adaptation" (Orlick & Werthner, 1987, p. 6).

Botterill (1988) states that a great percentage of former athletes seem to experience serious trauma upon retirement from competition, and suggests narrow identities and lack of self management skills as contributors to the athletes' adjustment difficulties. Those individuals with a narrow or "sport only" identity often have neglected other interests only

to find their basic feelings of confidence, self-worth, and stability greatly diminished upon retirement.

Many other references to the debilitating effects of athletic retirement can be found in the anecdotal accounts of numerous magazine and newspaper articles. For instance, Kaplan (1977) documented the difficult transition of American swimmer Debbie Meyer. Meyer, winner of three gold medals in the 1968 Olympics, retired at age 19 and did not know how to act or cope in the world beyond athletics. It took her nearly four years to regain her confidence and feel comfortable in a new life.

Similarly, McLaughlin (1981a,b) documented the retirement experiences of some of Canada's top amateur athletes. Through extensive interviews, McLaughlin relates the anguish and distress felt by many athletes upon retirement, but also mentions that for some, retirement can be a relief or at least minimally traumatic. What McLaughlin (1981a) concludes with confidence, however, is that retirement is a difficult experience for most athletes, "one that triggers varying degrees of emotional and physical stress" (p. 14).

Whether a transition poses a threat to one's identity or not, personal adjustments and adaptations are necessary (Coakley, 1983; George, 1980). Botterill (1988) recommends the early learning of career planning and time management skills, as well as holistic early counseling and psychological skills mastery as ways to smooth transition or prevent adaptation problems.

The paucity of systematically collected data as well as the atheoretical and retrospective nature of much of the sport transitional literature, has clearly demonstrated the continuing need for the further incorporation of theory and guiding models into future research.

The main purpose of this study is to theoretically determine the patterns of adaptation through which individuals progress during athletic transition. To achieve this purpose, the adult development literature and more specifically Charner & Schlossberg's (1986) model

for human adaptation to transitions, must now be discussed as this model is a most useful and appropriate framework from which to investigate the process of athletic transition.

Adult Development Literature

Adult development has only recently become the focus of scientific study (Schlossberg, 1984; Turner & Helms, 1987). In the past few decades, developmental psychologists have directed their research efforts toward infancy, childhood, and adolescence as these early years are characterized by rapid and highly visible biological and psychological change. Adulthood was viewed as a relatively static life stage. Adults were not seen as continuously developing individuals but were largely perceived as the end product of childhood experiences.

Today, however, the importance of adulthood as a critical phase of the life cycle is recognized. Clearly, adulthood is a dynamic life period as changes, transitions, crises, and adaptations continue throughout life (Herr & Cramer, 1988). The major theorists of adult development and adult career development look beyond adolescence to explore and define the psychic growth and developmental patterns of adulthood. Such work offers theoretical and applied guidelines for understanding adult behavior (Schlossberg, 1984).

Understanding the major theoretical perspectives of adult development is key to understanding how individuals adapt to inevitable transitions. Therefore, these major views will be outlined prior to discussing the most suitable theoretical frame work from which to investigate and understand adult variability in adaptation to athletic transitions.

Important conceptual orientations within the adult development literature can be loosely grouped according to the extent to which one's development is linked to chronological age and the degree to which predictability or variability in one's life course is emphasized (Schlossberg, 1984). These theoretical positions are not mutually exclusive or wholly

separate but interact with and overlap each other. The major theoretical perspectives on adult development are represented by: age and stage theories, life events and transition theories, and individual timing and variability theories (Schlossberg, 1984).

Age and Stage Theories. Stage theories assume that individuals encounter similar experiences at similar ages. Schlossberg (1984) has conveniently categorized the stage theories of adult development into three types based on: age (Levinson, 1978); issues precipitating new development (Gould, 1978; Erikson, 1950; Vaillant, 1977); and ethical and moral development (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1970), cognitive development (Perry, 1970), or ego development (Loevinger, 1976).

Age Related Theories. Levinson (1978) focuses on the course of adult male development. Levinson proposes that the adult years consist of a pattern of sequentially occurring, age-linked developmental periods. These periods are marked by alternating stable (structure-building) periods and transitional (structure-changing) periods. To date, Levinson has identified six distinct periods of adulthood, each linked to age and which allow individual variability. His findings show that the age at which each period begins and ends is similar for each individual and that each period is sequentially part of the whole.

Stage Related Theories. This view of adult development asserts that individuals go through a fixed sequence of developmental stages. Successful resolution of each stage must occur before moving on to the next stage. Therefore, age is not a necessary link between these stages as there are individual differences in terms of the speed at which people move through each stage, with some people becoming arrested at one particular stage and never moving beyond that stage.

Erikson's (1950) theory of ego development proposes an eight stage progression. Each stage is characterized by a critical issue that must be resolved successfully before one can move on to the next stage of development. The issues defining Erikson's adult stages are identity, intimacy, generativity, and ego integrity.

The underpinnings of Gould (1978), another stage theorist, rest on the notion that adults must strive to eliminate constricting childhood ideas. If individual autonomy or further personal growth is to be gained, adults must continually struggle to free themselves from irrational assumptions developed in childhood.

Cognitive, Moral, or Ego Development Theories. Other stage theorists postulate that human beings pass through an invariant sequence of stages with each stage being characterized by a particular world view.

Perry's (1970) theory of cognitive development, Loevinger's (1976) theory of ego development, and Kohlberg's (1970) moral development theory are similar in that all view development as a progression from the simple to the complex; from an external to an internal orientation; from absolutism and dogmatism to increasing tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty; from egocentrism to an awareness of individual differences; and from a strong self-focus to conformity within a group and then to interdependence with others.

Perry's model of cognitive development is based on empirical work with Harvard undergraduates. Through such research Perry defined three hierarchical stages of development: basic duality; relativism; and commitment. Basic duality denotes polarities such as right and wrong or good and bad. Relativism refers to the notion that all knowledge and values are contextual and relativistic. Developing personal commitment is necessary to affirm one's identity.

The three stages of Loevinger's ego development theory are the self-protective, the self-aware, and the most mature autonomous stage. Conformity characterizes the earliest stage as the individual tends to follow rules and think in stereotypes. At the next level, one gains the ability to think in terms of situational alternatives and multiple possibilities. Finally, the autonomous adult makes commitments, tolerates ambiguities, and can combine opposites.

Similarly, in Kohlberg's six-stage theory of development in moral judgment, adults progress from obeying rules and laws out of fear of punishment, to conforming to society, to being principled and autonomous.

The concept of qualitative differences in the way individuals process and interpret the world is clearly a well documented and supported perspective in adult development, yet it is important to note that the definitions of the stages have been challenged on the basis of using only male cohorts in such research.

Gilligan (1982) observes through her work with women that gender differences arise with regard to the issues identified as central to development. Theorists focusing on male development stress the ongoing process of individualization and achievement. In this sense, men have served as the model for adult development. Gilligan states that the important issues of attachment and interdependence are central in women's lives but diminished in the overall model of adult development and thus "the silence of women in the narrative of adult development distorts the conception of its stages and sequence" (p.156).

Life Events and Transition Theories. Those theoretical perspectives based on life events and transitions state that in understanding and evaluating an individual's behavior such events or transitions are more important than chronological age. For example, Lowenthal, Thurnher, and Chiriboga (1975) conducted a longitudinal study of adults as they experienced a pre-transitional period in their lives and prepared for their future. The subjects were men and women at four life stages: graduating high school seniors, young newlyweds, middle-aged parents, and an older pre-retirement group. At the start of the study each group was beginning a major transition. In short, the researchers found that the groups differed significantly in their general outlook on life, the stresses they faced, and their attitudes toward those stresses. The researchers concluded that it is more important to know how a person's life is constructed rather than knowing only his or her age. That is, knowing that a person is 35 years old and widowed with young children is more important in understanding behavior than only knowing that a person is 35.

Likewise, in the sport setting it is more important to know that a transitional athlete is 26 years old, financially destitute with no support network than only knowing that he/she is 26 years of age.

Other researchers take a life-span development approach which opposes those theories involving adult stages. Brim and Kagan (1980) note that it is difficult to find general patterns in adult development as growth is more individualistic than was once thought. Brim and Kagan state that "stages cast development as unidirectional, hierarchical, sequenced in time, cumulative, and irreversible - ideas not supported by commanding evidence" (1980, p. 13).

Brim and Ryff (1980), and Dohrenwend, Krasnoff, Askenasy, and Dohrenwend (1978) are among the life events and transition theorists. These researchers acknowledge the role of critical life events as markers or transition points in the development of the individual. Researchers taking this perspective tend to oppose the notion that early life or childhood experiences (especially traumatic ones) determine the course of an adult's life.

Another theorist who emphasizes transitions is Pearlin (1982). Pearlin looked at the life strains encountered by different people and their subsequent methods of coping with these stresses. He concluded that coping mechanisms for dealing with change are central to well-being rather than the knowledge of an inevitably occurring life event.

Individual Timing and Variability Theories. Those researchers supporting the individual timing perspective explain transitions and adaptive behavior by individual idiosyncrasy. The work of Neugarten (1979), Vaillant (1977), Pearlin and Leiberman(1979), and Kohn (1980) support this perspective.

Neugarten (1979) emphasizes variability or "individual fanning out." Neugarten uses the example of 10-year-olds being more similar to each other than 60-year-olds: "As lives grow longer, as the successive choices and commitments accumulate, lives grow different from each other" (1979, p. 891).

Neugarten points out that much adult behavior is controlled by social norms or what is considered to be age-appropriate behavior. Unlike childhood or adolescence, adulthood behavior is not based on biological necessity. It is our social clocks or "prescriptive timetable for the ordering of major life events" which impact upon much of adult behavior. Neugarten postulates that this social clock is in flux in view of the current trend to define our biographies in ways other than what constitutes appropriate behavior at different ages.

The Grant Study supports this concept of variability (Vaillant,1977). The study covers 35 years of the lives over 200 hundred men (most of them from high socioeconomic backgrounds and of high ability) starting from the time they were sophomores in college. Vaillant's findings show that the life cycle is more than a predictable sequence of invariant stages as the subject's lives were "full of surprises". Also emerging from the study was that the quality of sustained relationships with other people shape our future rather than the various traumas of childhood.

Further study illustrating this variability perspective is evident in Pearlin and Leiberman's (1979) work. These researchers found that age, sex, and socioeconomic status are important variables in the differential distribution of life strains. That is, as an adult, one's experience differs depending whether the individual is male or female, black or white, young or old, rich or poor, healthy or unhealthy.

Kohn (1980), in a study on the conditions under which learning capacity may improve over time, found that the substantive complexity of one's occupation impacts upon the individual's psychological functioning and vice versa. Looking specifically at intellectual flexibility, Kohn states that intellectual growth is likely to develop at a faster pace if one is exposed to a higher level of substantive complexity in one's job. That is, "small differences in the substantive complexity of early jobs might lead to increasing differences in intellectual development" (p.203).

This overview of the major perspectives in adult development has clearly shown that theorists differ greatly in their view of predictability and variability in the life cycle. It is important to note that the findings of these different studies are largely dependent on the samples and methods used as many studies have used small samples of men from middle class backgrounds.

Adulthood represents the longest, and likely the most significant portion of the life cycle. The recent work on adulthood has shown that adults clearly experience transitions or change in their personal lives, their family lives, their work lives, and themselves even though there is no agreement among the theorists as to the predictability and variability of change.

The theoretical perspectives of adult development provide important knowledge in the interpretation and explanation of adult experience. However, much of the literature on athletic transition is fundamentally problematic in that it fails to provide an adequate or appropriate theoretical framework, resulting in literature which is predominantly descriptive and fragmented.

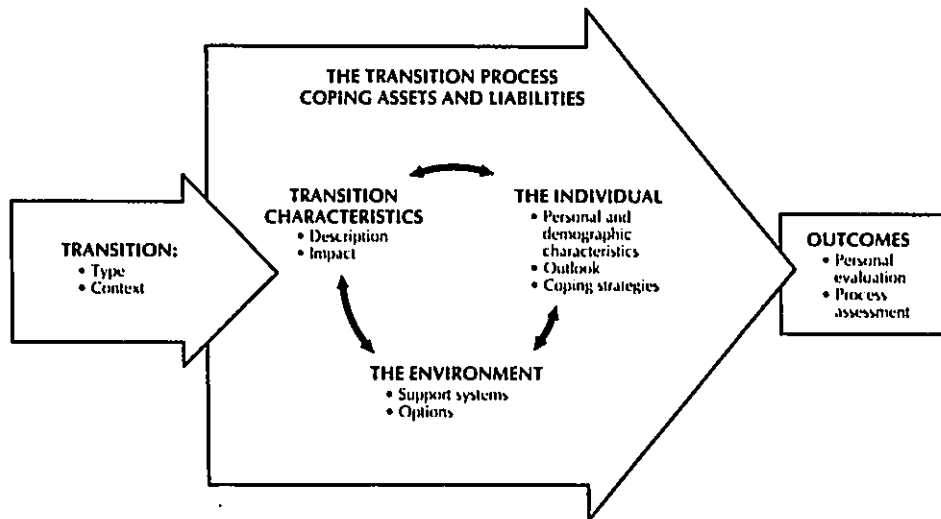
No single perspective in the adult development literature can adequately explain adult behavior in the context of athletic transition. To examine the process of athletic transition, or to account for all the variables inherent in such a process, a framework incorporating the notion that adults be viewed as individuals is paramount. Mounting evidence, as well as logic, denotes that adult behavior cannot be predicted from early childhood or categorized by age or stage. This individuality is a key notion yet a workable framework must insure that each transition situation does not have to be approached anew.

Charner & Schlossberg's (1986) model of adaptation to transition (see Figure 1) is a clear illustration of the way in which a variety of relevant concepts can be related and examined in a theoretically and pragmatically meaningful manner. Essentially, Schlossberg

(1984) concurs with the life-course or life-events perspective and her work draws from the approaches of several theorists.

Schlossberg's (1984) perspective is a departure from other frameworks in that it: 1) is specific; 2) considers an individual's subjective perception of stress and situational factors rather than assuming that a given life event has the same impact on all who experience it, regardless of the individual or circumstances; 3) explicitly incorporates the notion of the individual's capacity to actively respond to stressful situations; and 4) provides the opportunity for the perception of relief upon retirement rather than crisis only.

As a scheme for understanding athletic transition, Charner and Schlossberg (1986) present a most appropriate and comprehensive framework. However, several adjustments have been made to accommodate a sport specific perspective. Utilizing the adapted version of Charner and Schlossberg's model will more fully allow discovery of the conditions under which certain events lead to positive and/or negative outcomes in adjustment following retirement from high performance sport.



The Individual in Transition

Figure 1

The Theoretical Model

Much research has been done on individual adaptation to specific life events, including normal life transitions (e.g., marriage) and situations of extreme hardship (e.g., incarceration in concentration camps) (Schlossberg, 1981). This empirical work and the little work done on athletic transition show that individuals differ in their ability to adapt to change. For example, athletic transition may mark a loss of identity and lead to feelings of worthlessness in one athlete, while it may represent new interests and opportunities to another. Charner & Schlossberg's (1986) transitional analysis model, as applied to athletic transition, acts as a guide to discover what factors account for the smooth adaptation of some, and the traumatic strain of others as the result of transition.

Schlossberg (1984) believes that a tremendous number of variables seem to affect the outcome of the individual's transition and it is not the transition itself that is of primary importance, but how that transition relates to the stage, situation, and style of the individual at the time of the transition. The model postulates that adaptation to transition is influenced by three major sets of factors. These factors are: the characteristics of the particular transition; the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition; and the characteristics of the environment. These factors interact to produce the outcome: adaptive success or adaptive failure. Before offering an explanation of the model's variables, some definitions are offered.

Transition. Schlossberg (1981) sets forth a broad definition to ensure an inclusive analysis of transition. She states that "a transition can be said to occur if an event or nonevent results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (p. 5). These patterns of behavior may or may not be effective. A transition is not necessarily an issue of change, but is more a matter of the individual's perception of change (Schlossberg, 1981/1984; George, 1980). The term "nonevent" is used to include subtle changes or the nonoccurrence of specific anticipated events, such as not being selected to the Olympic

Team after being a member of the national team, or not achieving a specific performance goal.

The outcome of a transition is not always positive or always negative, as the same individual may perceive from that one transition, both positive and negative aspects (Schlossberg, 1981). For instance, in their study on men whose employment with NASA had been terminated due to a required reduction in jobs, Schlossberg & Leibowitz (1980) found that the men initially felt that their job loss was traumatic and the most difficult crisis they had yet suffered. However, a three-month follow-up interview with one of the subjects revealed that he felt lucky and more in control of his life.

In short, a transition is a transition if it is defined as such by the individual experiencing it (Schlossberg, 1981). For example, if retiring from the national team after five years of service does not change that athlete's perceptions of self (e.g., identity, competence, confidence), of the environment, or of his/her relationships (e.g., with family, friends, teammates), then it cannot be regarded as a transition as presented by Schlossberg's model. Yet, if another athlete experiences retirement as an event that marks his/her passage from competence to incompetence, or usefulness to uselessness, then it constitutes a transition. Thus, in Schlossberg's model, the individual defines the transition.

Adaptation. Schlossberg (1981) advocates a dynamic view of adaptation by stating that "adaptation to transition is a process during which an individual moves from being totally preoccupied with the transition to integrating the transition into his or her life" (p. 7). So, in the early stages of this movement, a person is wholly conscious of being a former athlete, or a new mother/teacher; later the person is aware of having been a high performance athlete, or being a mother, "but this awareness is only one of the dimensions of living". This first stage is termed by Lipman-Blumen (1976) as "pervasiveness", the latter stage being "boundedness". Pervasiveness is an awareness of the transition permeating all of a person's attitudes and behaviors, while boundedness is the change as contained and integrated into the self. Schlossberg (1981) emphasizes that each kind of

transition may have a particular pattern with respect to adaptation and that more empirical work looking at the varieties and common elements of adaptive patterns is needed.

If adaptation to transition does follow some general pattern, why do some people adapt more quickly and smoothly to athletic retirement than others? These questions are addressed by Schlossberg's (1981) second definitional component of adaptation that the ease of adaptation to a transition depends on the perceived and/or actual balance of assets to liabilities in terms of the transition itself; the individual's outlook and coping strategies; and the environment.

An example for clarification may help: Two athletes involuntarily leave high performance competition due to political problems within their associations. Both are shocked and distraught over the circumstances of their termination and are uncertain as to future employment or educational prospects. However, one of these athletes has sufficient resources to balance this deficit in her psychosocial well-being: She has a tremendously supportive network of family, friends and teammates; she obtained excellent marks as an undergraduate; has job experience related to her university degree; and is financially stable due to this work.

The other athlete is low on resources as she is being held responsible for her dismissal from the team by both her sport association and her teammates; her family and friends do not understand her distress; she has no educational background; no means of financial support; and is generally not a good copier. In this case, adaptation appears rather difficult as the liabilities or deficits far outweigh the assets or resources. Both athletes move through the transition process yet one individual has a smooth experience while the other does not.

Charner and Schlossberg's model assesses the difference of assets to liabilities, which allows for changes in the ratio as a person's situation changes. That is, at one point during an individual's transition, assets outweigh liabilities so adaptation is relatively easy. At another point, liabilities outweigh assets and adaptation is more difficult (Schlossberg,

1981). Yet, the assets-liabilities ratio, as a dynamic notion, also means that resources may be gradually restored following a period of an abundance of deficits. In other words, the second athlete in the above example could begin to recover the resources of economic survival, competence, esteem, and friends that she had prior to her sport career termination. A better balance between assets and liabilities can be achieved over time (Schlossberg,1981).

The model's major issues of transition and adaptation have been presented to ensure understanding of the following factors which appear to mediate between the transition and outcome.

Factors Affecting Adjustment to Transition

1) The Transition

Type: Planned or Unplanned. Transitions can either be planned (e.g., making the decision to retire after a successful performance in the upcoming Olympic Games) or unplanned (e.g., failing to make a performance standard and not being selected to the Olympic Team). Planned transitions are usually considered to be an asset in coping (Charner &Schlossberg, 1986).

Context. Transitions occur in a variety of settings. Transitions can be work or family related, and may include educational changes or geographical moves (Charner & Schlossberg, 1986). This study deals exclusively with transition in the context of retirement from high performance sport.

2) The Transition Process

i) Transition Characteristics:

Trigger. Trigger describes the specific reason that initiated the transition. What triggers a transition differs for each person. In the case of athletic retirement, the trigger could be any number of reasons including injury, failure in selection, financial limitations, political difficulties, employment, or a lack of desire, etc.

Timing: On-Time or Off-Time. Not all transitions are "scheduled," yet people have a general idea of what they should be doing at what age. Getting married, having children, taking a job, and retiring are linked in people's minds with age (Schlossberg, 1981). Many athletes, for instance, have a basic timetable for how long they expect to compete internationally and when they will begin a second career, even if they do not follow it.

Source: Internal or External. Perceived control over one's own life is the focus of this transition variable. Some changes are voluntary or by personal choice, and others are involuntary or forced on a person by other people or circumstances. Schlossberg (1981) hypothesized that the individual will adapt more smoothly to transitions in which the source is internal or voluntary. For example, the athlete who decides to retire next year after the World Championships will likely adapt with less difficulty than the athlete who is cut from the World Championship Team due to political decisions by the national sport organization.

Role Change: Gain or Loss. Many transitions involve role change. Some changes are usually pleasurable (e.g., marriage, promotion), while others can be painful (e.g., divorce, being fired). In the sport setting, an individual's role may change from athlete to former athlete, from athlete to executive, or from student to doctor. Of course many other variations are possible, however, most role changes generally have elements of both positive and negative affect. For example, an athlete who failed to be selected during team trials may see his or her transition to former international athlete as negative and a role loss

but may also be very positive about his or her new role as a graduate student. Regardless of whether a transition is perceived as a role gain or a role loss, some degree of stress accompanies it (Schlossberg, 1981).

Duration: Permanent, Temporary, Uncertain. Viewing a change as permanent will be perceived differently than one seen as temporary. A change that is painful may be more easily accepted if the person knows that the transition is limited in duration. For instance, it may be easier to cope with missing a year of competition to complete a university degree rather than miss the year to rehabilitate a serious injury that may or may not heal to satisfaction.

Any uncertainty connected with a transition likely produces the greatest degree of stress and negative affect in an individual (Schlossberg, 1984). Take for example those athletes who are not established as the best but must completely commit the entire year to heavy, intense training in order to trial for the Olympic Team. If the team is not finalized until a few weeks before the Olympic Games those athletes will spend much of the Olympic year in limbo waiting to learn their fate. The uncertainty of the situation is often difficult to cope with and is considered a liability in the transition process (Schlossberg, 1984).

In addition, the individual who has met a transition with adaptive success in the past is likely to be successful adjusting to another similar transition in the future (Schlossberg, 1984). Danish and D'Augelli (1980, p.114) comment that "The past experience has provided both constructive attitudes about the event and behavioral competencies that were reinforced by the success experience". Conversely, one who has failed to adapt well to a situation may be less able to cope with a similar situation in the future as a self-fulfilling prophecy may interfere. That is, if an athlete is unable to cope with the transition from his/her athletic career and subsequently returns to international competition, he/she may become less able to cope with the same transition in the future. Therefore, in the context of athletic retirement, those individuals who retired more than once incorporate a liability rather than an asset into their transition experience.

Degree of Stress. Schlossberg's (1981) final characteristic of a transition, the degree of stress involved, is somewhat dependent on the characteristics already discussed. Again, any transition or change causes some stress whether it is perceived as a gain or a loss, as positive or negative. Schlossberg (1981) comments that the stress related to a particular event depends more on the balance between an individual's resources and deficits at the time the event occurs, than on the event itself.

ii) Individual Characteristics:

Another major determinant of transitional outcome is the individual him/herself. Personal and demographic characteristics refer to an individual's race, gender, age, state of health, socioeconomic status, and educational background.

Age (and Life Stage). Schlossberg (1981) states that life stage may be more useful than chronological age in studying transitions. Lowenthal, Thurnher, & Chiriboga (1975) identify numerous stage differences with respect to the sources and nature of stress, the number of significant life events, and the ratio of positive to negative experiences. In the later stages of life, more subtle factors cause changes in self-perception and satisfaction (Schlossberg, 1981). For example, a 20 year old athlete who retires after having represented Canada in only one minor competition will likely have fewer adjustment difficulties than a brilliantly skilled, 20 year old, four year veteran, and captain of the national team. These two athletes are the same age but at different stages in their athletic careers and thus bring different values and sources of stress to their transition.

Health. One's state of health not only plays a part in affecting the impact of potentially stressful situations and thus one's ability to adapt to a transition, but may also be a source of stress (George, 1980; Schlossberg, 1981). That is, an athlete may completely recover from a serious injury (e.g., knee surgery) with little or no change in self-perception, or he/she may be victim to a lingering, chronic illness (e.g., epstein-barr disease) that leads to

a gradual decline in his/her physical well-being and subsequently affects his/her ability to cope with the fact that he/she can no longer perform at the elite level.

Socioeconomic Status. It is difficult to predict the impact of social status variables on the process of adjustment or adaptation (George, 1980). The notion that an individual with a lower-class background may have more limited resources (material and psychological) to deal with a transition is supported in the literature (Levine, 1976; Rosen & Bibring, 1968). For example, an athlete who has the financial resources to pursue alternative options upon retirement and/or to live in an enabling rather than constraining physical environment can more easily facilitate adaptation.

In addition to the personal and demographic variables already defined by Charner and Schlossberg (1986), specific questions regarding the athletic biographies of the respondents are essential to the meaningful interpretation of results. Knowledge of an athlete's investment in time, commitment, occupational identity, level of expertise, performance outcomes, and age at retirement are all essential variables in the examination of athletic transition. For example, knowing that an athlete has been a consistently successful international competitor over a period of years is likely an important factor in his/her adjustment to retirement.

Outlook. An individual's basic values and beliefs are important in his/her ability to adapt to a transition. A value system or outlook that contributes to adaptation at one life stage may be dysfunctional at another; thus people emphasize different values at different stages.

That is, individuals may experience a change in their general outlook on life when faced with a transition. This change in outlook may be linked to the context of the transition. For example, an athlete may consider his/her general outlook on life to be that of a 'fighter'. He/she may feel that as a seasoned international competitor he/she continually challenged his/her physiological and psychological capabilities. However, after experiencing excessive media and negative exposure due to the discovery of his/her use of

performance enhancing drugs, he/she may shift his/her outlook. This shift could be to several outlooks such as denial or helplessness. Denial in the case that he/she maintains his/her innocence and refuses to recognize the reality of the situation, and helplessness in the case that he/she is unable to help him/herself through the situation without the help of others.

Coping Strategies. The context or theme of a transition also affects the strategies individuals use to cope with that transition. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) identify three types of coping, each involving several strategies: 1) responses that modify the situation; 2) responses that control the meaning of the situation; and 3) responses that help to manage stress after it has occurred. No one coping strategy is the remedy to a particular transition. Effective coping requires the flexible utilization of a range of strategies depending on the situational demand (Schlossberg, 1984). The use of multiple strategies rather than using just one or two is considered an asset in coping and is directly related to successful adaptation.

Thus, a transitional athlete who can put an array of coping strategies to use (e.g., exercise, seeking advice, creating options for him/herself, and not worrying about things that are out of his/her control) will likely have mediated his/her transition more successfully than the athlete who utilizes the one strategy of ignoring the situation.

iii) Environment Characteristics:

The final major determinant of transitional adaptation is that of support systems and perceived options.

Interpersonal Support Systems. Support systems vary as to sources and type of support (Charner & Schlossberg, 1986). Research indicates that interpersonal support is important and essential to successful adaptation and that the utilization of multiple sources of support is advantageous in the coping process (Schlossberg, 1981; Pearlin, 1980).

Schlossberg's model specifies three different types of interpersonal support systems: i) intimate relationships, ii) the family unit, and iii) the network of friends.

Fiske and Weiss (1977) state that intimate relationships, those "involving trust, support, understanding and the sharing of confidences" (p.25) - are an important resource during stressful transitions.

The importance of the family unit as a support system in times of transition has been documented by several studies (Lipman-Blumen, 1976; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1975). Levine's (1976) study of draft dodgers and deserters indicates that those individuals who received parental support for their decision adapted better to their action to flee to Canada than did those individuals whose parents disapproved of their action.

One's network of friends is also an important social support system. The loss of friends in conjunction with a transition (e.g., leaving a sport career due to injury and then moving back home to a different geographical location) can exacerbate the difficulties of that transition. On the other hand, the presence of friends can cushion the sudden shock of sustaining a career ending injury.

Institutional Support Systems. These supports include "occupational organizations, religious institutions, political groups, social welfare or other community support groups" (Lipman-Blumen, 1976), and any other agency offering workshops, seminars, lectures, discussion groups, and other programs that an individual can access for help. In the sport setting the most common institutional support sources are Sport Canada, National Sport Organizations, and the Olympic Athlete Career Center. These federally funded organizations have the provisions to offer transitional athletes support in the form of financial assistance, employment opportunities, as well as career and emotional counseling.

Perceived Options. Essentially, options are those ways and means of dealing with a transition that an individual perceives as being available to him or her (Charner & Schlossberg, 1986). The availability of options may depend on the type or trigger of the

transition itself. That is, those athletes who undergo injury related transitions may perceive several options including the prospect of employment as an assistant or national coach. Conversely, the athlete who is cut from the national team due to the lack of skill or a poor working relationship with the coaching staff will likely not perceive a coaching position or a position within the National Sport Organization to be a possible option.

An athlete in transition may also create options for him/herself. The athlete may continue his/her athletic career as a professional in another country, begin or return to a university degree program, or enter a training program to prepare for a new type of job or career. Thus, some individuals will perceive the availability of several options while others will perceive none or only one. Clearly, those individuals who have multiple options are better equipped to negotiate a smooth transition than the individual who perceives no options at all.

3) Outcome

Outcome refers to the respondents' personal evaluation of their transition and their assessment of the transition process itself.

Personal Evaluation. One way to assess an individual's adjustment to a transition is to procure the individual's subjective perception of the event. Evaluations will range from being satisfied with the consequences of transition, being dissatisfied with the consequences, to a mixed evaluation.

Process Assessment. The process assessment variable seeks to obtain whether or not the respondents believed they had used the most enabling combination of resources, strategies, and options while negotiating their transitions.

A Modified Model Proposed for Investigation

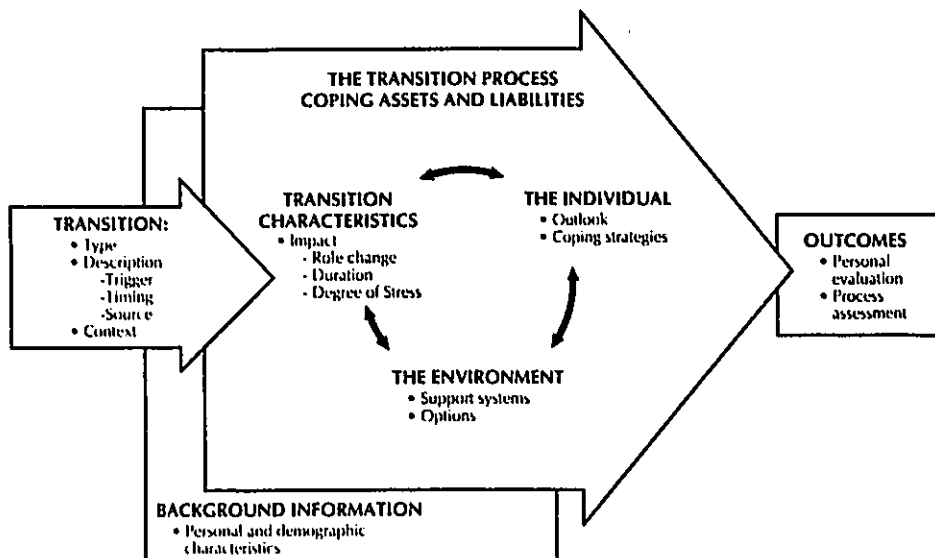
Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model provides a two-phase framework for examining the individual in transition (Figure 1). In the first phase, the intention of the model is to assess the type and context of an individual's transition (e.g., planned or unplanned; work, school, or family related, etc.), and to determine which, if any, of these factors impact upon the transition or adjustment process. That is, this *Transition phase* intends to describe the parameters surrounding the retirement.

The second phase represents interactions and responses that arise once the transition has been initiated, and their impact, if any, on individual adjustment outcome. This *Transition Process phase* intends to describe the impact of retirement.

A thorough examination of the model and the theorists' original definition of categories, however, reveals that the set of factors labelled "transition characteristics" includes variables that do not relate to the Transition Process but instead describe the circumstances surrounding the transition itself. More specifically, the variables *trigger*, *timing*, and *source* describe the transition itself rather than the impact of the transition. Therefore, in the modified model these variables are included in the Transition phase of the model.

Further, in the Transition Process phase, Charner and Schlossberg (1986) include demographic and personal characteristics (e.g., age, sex, sport, etc.) in the set of factors labelled individual characteristics. In this location, it is indicated that these variables are influenced by every other variable in the transition model. However, although these demographic and personal variables have the potential to influence other variables, they are not influenced by the transition itself or by the transition process. For example, the sex of an individual may influence the amount of support received, yet the amount of support received will not effect the sex of the individual. As such, demographic and personal characteristics are a backdrop characterizing each individual in transition.

Figure 2 depicts a slightly modified version of Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model of the individual in transition. These modifications simply reassign specific characteristics to alternate categories in order to establish a more precise model. In summary, for the purposes of this study, those variables which describe the transition itself are defined as *Transition phase* variables. Those variables which describe the impact as a result of the transition are defined as transition characteristics housed within the *Transition Process phase*. Personal and demographic characteristics are presented under background information which is pertinent to each individual's transition from high performance sport.



A Modified Model of the Individual in Transition

Figure 2

Chapter 3

Method

Subjects and Procedure

Retired high performance athletes (N=199) with international competitive experience served as the subjects for this study. These athletes represented Canada at various international events (e.g., Olympic Games, World Championships, World Cups, team tours) as members of Canadian national teams. Athletes ranged in age from 15 to 59 years (M =28.9, SD=5.6) and included 99 males and 100 females. The mean age at retirement was 25.9 years and 41% of the sample had been retired for two years. The subjects had a mean of 6.4 years of national team experience, and represented 31 national team sports.

The names and addresses of all national team athletes who had formally retired from international competition since 1980 were obtained from the Athlete Information Bureau (AIB). The AIB is a federally funded agency responsible for the compilation of demographic and public relations information pertaining to every Canadian high performance athlete. To ensure that the AIB list of athlete names and addresses was current and accurate, each National Sport Organization was also contacted. Each of the 340 retired athletes were mailed a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, an anonymous questionnaire that took approximately 20 minutes to complete, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Informed consent was inferred by returned questionnaires. A follow-up letter was sent to each athlete approximately four weeks after distribution of the initial questionnaire to encourage compliance. All completed questionnaires utilized in the study were returned by mail within two weeks after the follow-up. The return rate was 59%.

Limitations

Several limitations are present within this study. The population sampled was not complete due to the incomplete list of names and addresses of retired athletes obtained from the Athlete Information Bureau and the National Sport Organizations. The return rate is also a limitation.

The survey design of the study limited the depth and subjectivity of responses obtained. However, this design appeared to be the most conducive to obtaining the greatest amount of information from a large portion of the population.

Instrument

Athlete Retirement Questionnaire. The Athlete Retirement Questionnaire (ARQ) was a 34-item instrument developed to address the transitional experiences of former high performance athletes (Appendix A). The ARQ consisted of two distinct parts. Part 1 was structured to obtain information for confirmatory testing of Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model for analyzing human adaptation to transition. The content of Part 1 of the ARQ was based on the variables defined by Charner & Schlossberg's (1986) conceptual model of transition. Part 1 of the ARQ consisted of 23 self-assessment items designed to obtain information about subjects' national team career and their retirement transition. Responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale or by other forced-choice formats.

Part 2 of the questionnaire was exploratory and consisted of 11 items assessing the practicality of providing transitional services to athletes. The items were generated from a review of the sport science literature and through pilot interviews conducted with high performance athletes. Questions were framed by forced-choice or open-ended format.

An initial version of the ARQ (Part 1 and Part 2) was pilot-tested with the cooperation of 12 retired high performance athletes. Feedback from these individuals was used to clarify ambiguous phrasing or items and to ensure their context-specific relevance.

The variables utilized by the ARQ to obtain the *athletes perception* of their own transition experience were grouped, in accordance with the modified conceptual model, into the following three categories: 1) the Transition; 2) the Transition Process; and 3) Outcome. Variables related to the model and those not related to the model are defined below.

Model-Related Variables:

**1) Transition:
Type - Planned/Unplanned**

- **Trigger** determined whether an athlete's retirement was planned or unplanned and the specific reason(s) for retirement.

**2) Transition Process:
i) Transition Characteristics**

- **Before** determined if the athlete had retired before.
- **Duration** asked if one's retirement was permanent.
- **Change** discovered if retirement had brought change to one's life.
- **How** rated the extent (e.g., positive or negative) of that change.
- **Adapt** identified the amount of time it took for the athlete to adapt to the transition of retirement.
- **Stressor** determined how much stress one generally felt during the first months following retirement.
- **Degree** detected what issues were of concern to the athlete following retirement.

ii) Individual Characteristics:

- **Outlook** classified the individual's general outlook on life at the time of this study.
- **Deal** identified those coping strategies athletes found helpful.

iii) Environment Characteristics:

- **Support** determined how much support athletes received and from whom.
- **Interest** assessed whether the individual had something of interest to get involved in immediately upon retirement.

- **Involved** determined if the athlete was already participating in this interest while he/she was on the national team.

3) Outcome:

- **Feel** rated the level of life satisfaction since retirement.
- **Transit** identified how well athletes handled their transition out of sport.

Background Information:

Personal and Demographic Characteristics

- **Sport, Age, and Sex** are simple demographic measures.
- **Competition** referred to the number of years one had competed in one's sport at any level.
- **National** referred to how many years an individual was a member of the national team.
- **Commitment** was the number of years one's athletic career was a full-time pursuit.
- **Level** determined at what level the individual competed (e.g., Olympics, World Championships, Touring Teams, etc.).
- **Performance** was the athletes' best career performance results.
- **Year** referred to the date of the athletes' retirement from the national team.
- **Retire** was the age of the individual at retirement.
- **Married** determined if the athlete was married or involved in a serious relationship at the time of retirement.
- **Goals** asked if the athlete accomplished his/her personal goals with respect to his/her sport.

Exploratory Variables (Variables not Related to Model):

- **Stress** determined how much stress one generally felt in life while a member of the national team.
- **Factor** listed the significant focuses currently in place in the athlete's life.
- **Current** determined the importance of the athlete's national team experience compared with his/her current situation.
- **Preparation** determined the average time per week athletes spent on mental and physical preparation for competition while on the national team.

- Now referred to the average time individuals spent on mental preparation for a new focus or interest, as well as how physically active they have been in retirement.
- Services determined if athletes had utilized any transition services since retiring.
- Career specified what types of services athletes desired or did not desire both during their national team career and during the transition out of sport.
- Consultant identified whether an athlete would seek assistance for transitional difficulties, and if so, from whom.
- Seminar referred to whether or not individuals would be interested in attending workshops dealing with retirement issues.
- Place determined where these workshops would have to be located to gain their attendance.
- High Performance permitted suggestions from athletes that may benefit other athletes when dealing with the transition process.
- Sport Organization permitted suggestions for institutions (e.g., Sport Canada or National Sport Organizations) or national coaches regarding athlete retirement.

Statistical Analyses

Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) theoretical model of transition has been described and explored in the adult development literature, yet previous to this study, had not been empirically tested. Therefore, to examine the individual in transition, specific questions related to the conceptual framework were asked. The following four sections outline the questions asked and the methods used to answer them. The first section provides a summary of the characteristics of the athlete in transition. The second and third sections examine the relationships explicitly proposed by the conceptual model, and the last section explores other relationships thought to influence the adjustment to transition.

1) *What are the characteristics of the transitional athlete?*

Descriptive statistics were obtained for the subject sample. Frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations were used to describe the general characteristics of the transitional athlete as outlined by the ARQ.

2) *Does the type of transition (e.g., planned or unplanned) influence how the athlete moves through the transition process?*

The Transition Process consists of three groups of variables - the characteristics of the particular transition, the individual's characteristics, and the particular individual's environment. In order to address the differential effects of transition type (e.g., planned or unplanned) on the Transition Process, separate one-way multivariate analyses of variance were performed on each of the three groups of Transition Process variables. The remaining variables were analyzed via chi-square tests of independence.

The first MANOVA examined the effect of type on transition characteristics, the second MANOVA examined the effect of type on individual characteristics, and the final MANOVA examined the effect of type on environment characteristics. The independent variable for each analysis was type. The dependent variables are presented in Table 1. All variables were selected in accordance with the variable categories presented in the theoretical model.

It was deemed appropriate to use this multivariate approach as the large number of variables to be analyzed appeared unsuitable for loglinear analyses. In addition, it is often not unreasonable to think of a 5-point scale as continuous. Prior to conducting these analyses each individual's transition type (e.g., planned or unplanned) had to be determined.

Determination of Type. The Trigger variable is comprised of 11 components each representing a specific reason for retirement. Each reason was labelled by the investigator as planned or unplanned according to the general nature of that reason. Those transitions that were generally anticipated or foreseeable by the athlete were classified as planned. The planned group included the following reasons for retirement: 1) achieved one's sport related goals; 2) found a job; 3) became tired of the circuit or lifestyle/time to move on;

Table 1

Dependent Variables used in Multivariate Analyses

<p>Transition Characteristics</p>	<p>Change How Stressor Degree - Feeling incompetent Finances Illness in Family Injury Loss of status Missing social aspect Job/school pressures Personal illness Lack self confidence Difficulties - coach/association family/friends</p>
<p>Individual Characteristics</p>	<p>Outlook Deal - Laughing Drinking/drugs Finding another focus Crying Ignoring difficulties Keeping busy Keeping feelings in Readings Staying in touch Talking Training/exercising Career counselling Personal counselling</p>
<p>Environment Characteristics</p>	<p>Support - Spouse/mate Other family Teammates Other friends Coach National Organization Olympic Center Sport Canada</p>

and 4) wanted more time for a personal relationship. Those transitions generally not anticipated or unexpected were classified as unplanned. The unplanned group consisted of the following: 1) difficulties with coaching staff; 2) difficulties with National Sport Organization; 3) injury; 4) lack of finances; 5) lack of support from family and/or friends; 6) not being selected to the team; and 7) declining performance.

A scale rating of 5 indicated the reason initiating one's retirement as the most significant reason. To determine each individual's group membership or type, all subjects who rated one reason as a 5 were selected and then assigned to the appropriate planned or unplanned group. Individuals rating more than one reason as a 5 were excluded from the analyses as each individual could be assigned to one group only, either the planned or unplanned group.

Chi-square tests of independence were done on the Transition Process variables of Before, Duration, Adapt, Interest, and Involved. The design of the questions in the ARQ tapping these particular variables was unsuitable for multivariate analysis.

3) Does the balance of each individual's coping assets and liabilities relate to the outcome of the transition?

The theoretical model for exploring transitions states that the balance of each individual's coping assets and liabilities determines the outcome of the transition. In order to examine this relationship, two separate loglinear analyses were carried out. However, prior to these procedures a global asset or liability score for each individual had to be determined.

Determination of Asset/Liability Groups. Variables representing the Transition Process were selected as assets or liabilities in accordance with Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model of transition, Schlossberg's theoretical position (1984), and the current adult development literature.

Assets. Those factors considered assets in the transition process were identified when the individual: encountered positive life change (How), little stress (Stressor), and few problems (Degree) following retirement; had a positive outlook on life (Outlook); utilized effective coping strategies (Deal); and received much support (Support).

Liabilities. Those factors considered liabilities were identified when the individual reported: experiencing a negative life change (How), much stress (Stressor), and problems (Degree) during the transition; a negative outlook on life (Outlook); ineffective coping strategies (Deal); and very little support (Support).

A global asset/liability score was calculated for each subject by adding all variable ratings and determining the mean. This group of scores was then divided in half into a liability group (e.g., low score) and an asset group (e.g., high score).

Prior to carrying out the statistical procedures, the Outcome variables of Feel and Transit were collapsed from five to four cells due to low cell frequencies. At this point, separate loglinear analyses were performed to determine the effects of the interaction of transition (Block 1), individual (Block 2), and environment (Block 3) characteristics on the Outcome variables Feel and Transit. A 2x2x2 fully crossed design was employed. The three independent variables were identified as Block 1, Block 2, and Block 3 (Table 2) and each variable had two levels (e.g., high and low). The two dependent variables were Transit and Feel. All variables were selected in accordance with the variable categories presented in the theoretical model.

4) What other relationships influence an individual's adjustment to transition?

Chi-square tests of independence were conducted to assess other relationships thought to influence transitional adjustment. These relationships were implied but not explicitly specified by the theoretical model hence closer examination of these relationships was

Table 2

Independent Variables used in Loglinear Analyses

<p>Block 1 -</p> <p>Transition Characteristics</p>	<p>How Stressor Degree - Feeling incompetent Finances Illness in Family Injury Loss of status Missing social aspect Job/school pressures Personal illness Lack self confidence Difficulties - coach/association family/friends</p>
<p>Block 2 -</p> <p>Individual Characteristics</p>	<p>Outlook Deal - Laughing Drinking/drugs Finding another focus Crying Ignoring difficulties Keeping busy Keeping feelings in Readings Staying in touch Talking Training/exercising Career counselling Personal counselling</p>
<p>Block 3 -</p> <p>Environment Characteristics</p>	<p>Support - Spouse/mate Other family Teammates Other friends Coach National Organization Olympic Center Sport Canada</p>

warranted. Therefore, the relationships between Transition and Outcome, Transition Process variables and Outcome, as well as the relationships between specific reasons for retirement (Transition) and transition characteristics were examined to determine if any of the characteristics were linked to adjustment.

The procedure of collapsing item categories due to low cell frequencies was performed prior to conducting the analyses. For example, Likert scale items were collapsed into a 3 point scale (e.g., categories 1,2=1; 3=2; 4,5=3).

Chapter 4

Results

This investigation was designed to test Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) conceptual model of adaptation to transition within the context of high performance sport, and to obtain practical information regarding the transition process in high performance sport. The Athlete Retirement Questionnaire (ARQ) was developed to examine the factors associated with individual adjustment to transition from high performance sport in Canada. The ARQ was distributed by mail to retired elite athletes. The responses were then analyzed in an attempt to discern if predictors of individual transition adjustment could be identified.

These results are reported in four sections. First, the descriptive statistics for the subject sample are presented. The second section examines the influence of the Transition type on the Transition Process. In the third section, the effects of the interaction between the three major groups of variables of the Transition Process on Outcome are reported, and the last section deals with relationships between other variables thought to influence individual adjustment to transition.

1) *What are the characteristics of the transitional athlete?*

Table 3 depicts the descriptive indices for the biographical variables of age, the number of years competing in sport in general, the number of years on the national team, the number of years of full-time commitment to one's national team sport, and one's age at retirement.

A total of 31 national team sports were represented with Field Hockey, Canoeing, and Rowing accounting for 36% of the total sample. Forty-six percent of the sample felt they had achieved their sport-related goals while 43% felt they had not. The majority of athletes (64%) had competed in the Olympic Games.

Table 3
Means and Standard Deviations for Biographical Variables

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Age.....	28.9	5.6
Years of Competition	13.2	5.4
Years on National Team.....	6.5	3.3
Years of Full-Time Commitment.....	5.6	4.0
Age at Retirement.....	25.9	5.0
Years of Retirement.....	4.0	2.7

The three most important reasons (Table 4) athletes selected for deciding to retire were the following: 1) they *were tired of the circuit or lifestyle/time to move on* (M=3.4, SD=1.5); 2) they *had achieved their goals* (M=3.1, SD=1.4); and 3) they *had difficulties with coaching staff* (M=2.8, SD=1.7). Those reasons thought to be of least importance in influencing the decision to retire were: 1) *lack of support from family and/or friends* (M=1.4, SD=.89); 2) *found a job* (M=1.9, SD=1.4); and 3) *not selected to the team* (M=1.9, SD=1.5).

At the time of the study, 41% of the sample had been retired for two years. Another 14% had been retired for one year while 12% had been retired for six years. In terms of the temporal aspect of adaptation, 23% of the sample reported, at the time of the study, that they had not yet totally adapted to their new situation out of high performance sport. Interestingly, another 23% said that they had adapted almost immediately (within one or

two months) to life beyond competitive sport, and 32% took six months or one year to feel totally adapted. The remaining 22% took more than two years to adjust.

The vast majority of athletes (88%) had not retired previously and 82% felt their retirement was permanent. In addition, (see Table 5) the majority of the retired athletes (73%) indicated that retirement had changed their lives a fair amount or immensely ($M=4.0$, $SD=.93$), and in a generally positive manner (63%) ($M=3.8$, $SD=.93$).

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations for Retirement Decisions

<u>Variable-Trigger</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Type</u>
Tired of the circuit or lifestyle/time to move on.....	3.4	1.5	P
Achieved goals.....	3.1	1.4	P
Difficulties with coaching staff	2.8	1.7	U
Wanted more time for a personal relationship.....	2.6	1.4	P
Lack of finances	2.5	1.5	U
Difficulties with National Sport Organization.....	2.4	1.5	U
Injury	2.1	1.5	U
Declining performance.....	2.0	1.3	U
Not selected to the team.....	1.9	1.5	U
Found a job	1.9	1.4	P
Lack of support from family and/or friends.....	1.4	0.9	U

P = planned transition U = unplanned transition

The amount of stress athletes generally felt in their lives while a member of the national team was moderate ($M=3.3$, $SD=1.2$) although 47% reported meeting with a fair amount or a great deal of stress (Table 5). Stress encountered during the first six or eight months following retirement was also viewed as moderate ($M=3.1$, $SD=1.4$) yet 46% of the transitional athletes reported meeting with a fair amount or a great deal of stress at this time.

During these early months of transition, the athletes faced various personal concerns (Table 5). In general, athletes found *missing the social aspect of sport* (M=2.8, SD=1.3), *job/school pressures* (M=2.7, SD=1.3), and *finances* (M=2.7, SD=1.4) to have caused moderate problems at this time in their transition. However, 37% of the athletes reported fair to serious problems with missing the social aspect of their sport, 32% reported fair to serious problems with job/school pressures, and 34% reported fair to serious problems with finances.

Those issues that appeared not to be a problem for most athletes at this time were: 1) *personal illness* (M=1.3, SD=.87); 2) *illness in family* (M=1.3, SD=.92); and 3) *relationship difficulties with family/friends* (M=1.5, SD=.96).

Table 5
Means and Standard Deviations for Transition Characteristics

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Change (how much).....	4.0	0.9
How (negative/positive).....	3.8	0.9
Stress (while on national team).....	3.3	1.2
Stressor (following retirement).....	3.1	1.4
Degree -		
Missing social aspect of sport.....	2.8	1.3
Job/school pressures.....	2.7	1.3
Finances	2.7	1.4
Relationship difficulties with coach/association	2.5	1.6
Loss of status	2.3	1.2
Feeling incompetent in activities other than sport.....	2.1	1.2
Lack of self confidence	2.0	1.3
Injury	1.9	1.3
Relationship difficulties with family/friends	1.5	1.0
Illness in family.....	1.3	0.9
Personal illness	1.3	0.9

During the first few months of transition, 86% of the subjects rated their general outlook on life as fairly positive or positive (M=4.4, SD=0.9) (Table 6). Some coping strategies were found to be very helpful while others were deemed not helpful. Athletes found the following strategies most beneficial during the transition phase of retirement (Table 6): 1) *finding another focus of interest* (M=4.2, SD=1.0); 2) *keeping busy* (M=4.0, SD=1.1); and 3) *training/exercising* (M=3.8, SD=1.3). The potential methods of dealing with any stress encountered during retirement that were either not used or viewed as not helpful included: 1) *drinking alcohol/drugs* (M=1.2, SD=.64); 2) *counselling for personal difficulties* (M=1.4, SD=.95); and 3) *ignoring difficulties* (M=1.5, SD=.94).

Table 6
Means and Standard Deviations for Individual Characteristics (coping strategies)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Outlook.....	4.4	0.9
Deal -		
Finding another focus of interest	4.2	1.0
Keeping busy	4.0	1.1
Training/exercising	3.8	1.3
Talking with someone who listens	3.5	1.4
Staying in touch with sport and/or friends in sport.....	3.3	1.4
Laughing about it	2.7	1.5
Keeping feelings to self.....	1.9	1.1
Crying.....	1.9	1.3
Readings on athlete retirement	1.7	1.2
Career counselling.....	1.6	1.1
Ignoring difficulties	1.5	0.9
Personal counselling	1.3	1.0
Drinking alcohol/drugs.....	1.2	0.6

Athletes rated the support they received (e.g., emotional, financial, job contacts, etc.) from interpersonal and/or institutional sources during retirement (Table 7). The most supportive groups were: 1) *spouse/mate* (M=3.6, SD=1.5); 2) *other family members* (M=3.5, SD=1.5); and 3) *other friends* (M=3.1 SD=1.4). The institutional groups provided the least support: 1) *national sport organization* (M=1.4, SD=.87); 2) *Sport Canada* (M=1.4, SD=.99); and 3) *Olympic Athlete Career Center* (M=1.5, SD=1.1).

Upon retirement from high performance sport, 91% of the athletes reported having had something of interest (e.g., a job, school, a relationship, hobbies, etc.) to get involved or absorbed in immediately. Of those who did have another interest, 69% had been involved in this activity while competing on the national team.

In terms of the athletes' perception of their adjustment to transition from sport, 74% felt generally satisfied about their lives since retirement, 11% felt generally dissatisfied, while 15% had neutral feelings about life since leaving high performance sport (M=4.0, SD=1.1)(Table 7). The majority of athletes (60%) felt, in general, that they handled their transition well, 27% felt neutral, whereas 15% felt they had handled the transition poorly (M=3.7, SD=1.1).

Table 7
Means and Standard Deviations for Environment Characteristics (support networks) and Outcome

<u>Variable</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Support		
Spouse/mate.....	3.7	1.5
Other family members	3.5	1.5
Other friends	3.1	1.3
Teammates	2.4	1.4
Coach.....	1.9	1.3
Olympic Athlete Career Center.....	1.5	1.1
Sport Canada.....	1.4	1.0
National Sport Organization.....	1.4	0.9
Feel (dissatisfied/satisfied about life).....	4.0	1.1
Transit (handled very poorly/very well).....	3.7	1.1

The exploratory information regarding the transition process from high performance sport provided a baseline for assessing the types of retirement services that would benefit athletes. When asked to compare their current situation with their national team experience in terms of importance, 43% of the athletes responded that their current focus was more important, and 37% responded that their current situation and their national team experience were of equal importance ($M=3.4$, $SD=1.1$). Athletes who felt that being on the national team was more important to them than their current activities totalled 20%. When asked to list the significant factors or activities present in their lives today, it was found that the most significant focuses were: 1) *developing/maintaining an important relationship* (84%); 2) *training/working out* (69%); 3) *full-time employment* (64%); and 4) *furthering their education* (55%).

When comparing the amount of physical and mental preparation athletes engaged in while on the national team and after retirement, it was found that the quantity of physical training time decreased and the mental preparation time remained somewhat the same. For example, while competing with the national team 31% of the athletes spent approximately 21-25 hours per week on physical training, 21% spent between 16-20 hours per week, 20% spent between 26-30 hours per week, and 18% trained more than 30 hours per week. After retiring, 31% of the athletes were physically active for about 4-6 hours per week and 28% spent 7-9 hours a week training or exercising.

In terms of mental preparation, while involved in high performance sport 41% of the athletes spent an average of 0-5 hours per week on mental preparation (e.g., setting short and long term goals, imaging successful performances, preparing training and competition plans, watching videos of their performances, etc.), while another 33% spent 6-10 hours a week on the same mental training. After retiring, 49% of the individuals stated that they spent 1-3 hours per week mentally preparing for their new focus or interest (e.g., setting short and long term goals, preparing plans to achieve their goals, imaging successful

performance, etc.). Another 18% spent 4-6 hours a week on mental preparation once they had left elite sport.

Limited retirement services are available to retired national team members and only 27% of the athletes used these services. The reason cited most often (31% of responses) for not utilizing such assistance was that the athletes did not require or desire the services offered as they had their own career plans formulated or already underway (Figure 3). Other frequently cited reasons related to the use of the Olympic Athlete Career Center (OACC) were that athletes were simply not aware of such services (16% of responses), they did not find the services helpful (9% of responses), they knew of the OACC but were not aware of the specific services available (9% of responses), and they used the OACC for instruction in creating a resume or obtaining business cards (7% of responses).

The types of services of most interest to the athletes both during their high performance sport career and during the transition to a new focus included: 1) *financial assistance* (89%); 2) *information on job and educational opportunities* (82%); 3) *readings on how other athletes have dealt with retirement* (76%); 4) *opportunities to help one learn to transfer their mental skills to a new career or interest* (74%); 5) *opportunities to help one focus on finding a new career or interest* (74%); 6) *a physiological and dietary detraining program* (63%); 7) *seminars with other retired athletes* (62%); and 8) *suggestions to help one feel more confident or competent in new surroundings* (62%).

When asked who they would consult for assistance if they were having difficulty with stress in retirement, most of the athletes (46%) responded that they would consult neither a sport psychologist nor another type of psychologist or counsellor. However, 35% said they would seek out a sport psychologist. Only 8% would consult another type of psychologist.

Reasons for Using/Not Using Olympic Athlete Career Center Retirement Services

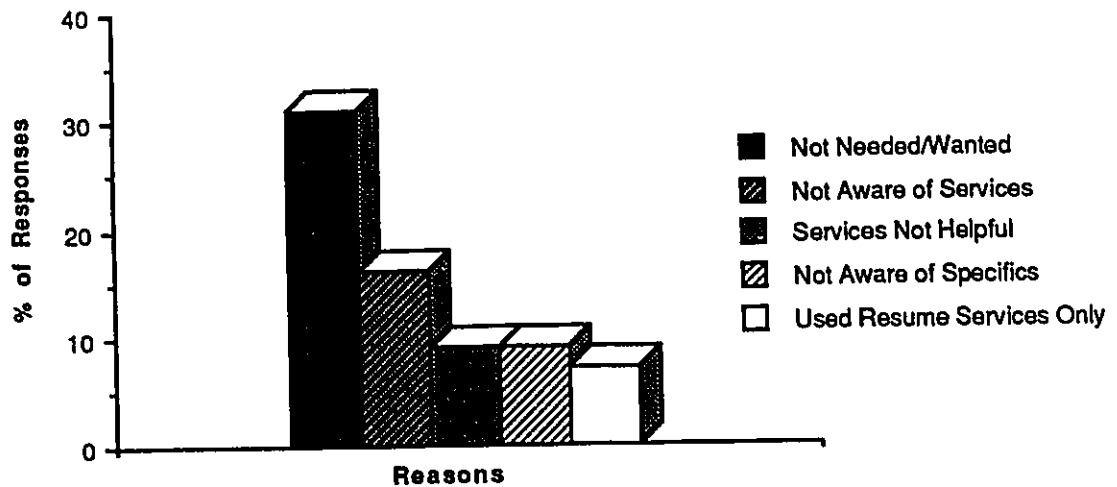


Figure 3

If the option of a seminar or a series of seminars or workshops dealing with retirement issues were available, 74% of the sample indicated an interest in attending. However, 53% stated that the seminars would have to take place in their city for them to attend.

When asked to provide suggestions to other high performance athletes moving through the transition process the most prevalent recommendation offered by the subjects was that one must plan for retirement (35% of responses) (Figure 4). They felt that pre-retirement planning should begin while still competing. Athletes felt that maintaining a balance in one's life was important and thus career or educational goals as well as social contacts should be pursued to some extent while still competing. Other suggestions for effective adaptation to transition included finding an alternate focus (10% of responses), continuing to train or exercise (7% of responses), maintaining contact with other transitional athletes (7% of responses), and learning to transfer mental skills used in sport to one's new career or focus (4% of responses).

The most frequent suggestions retired athletes had for coaches and the institutional network of elite amateur sport (e.g., Sport Canada, National Sport Organizations, and the Olympic Athlete Career Center) were to treat the retiring/retired athlete with respect rather than as a disposable commodity (18% of responses), and to offer financial support in retirement (18% of responses) (Figure 5).

Many athletes felt ignored, used, forgotten, and discarded in retirement. Athletes felt that these feelings of isolation could have been minimized by being informed that their contributions were appreciated and worthwhile, and through continued contact from the national organizations through such simple means as remaining on the mailing list for newsletters and other updates regarding the organizations' functioning. In terms of

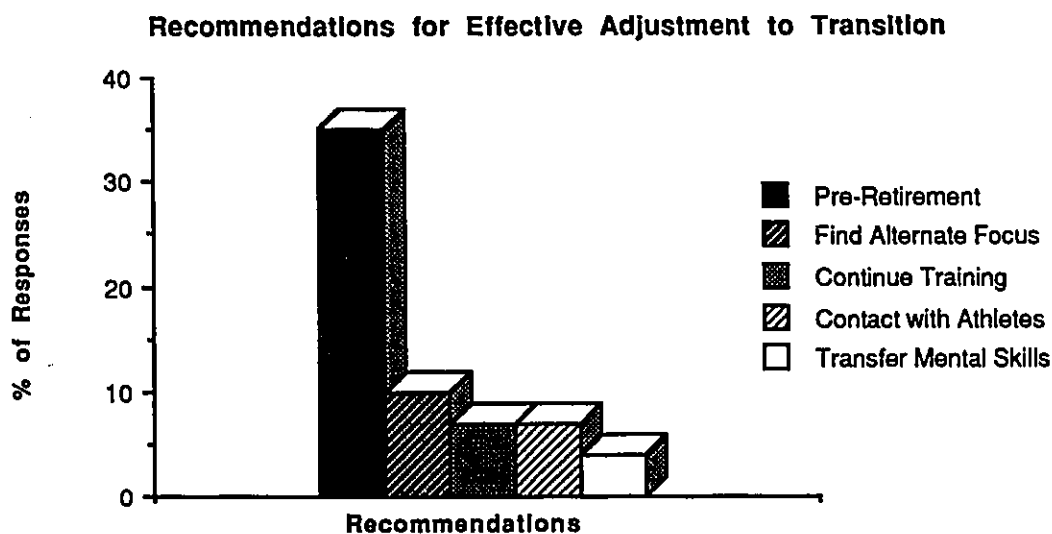


Figure 4

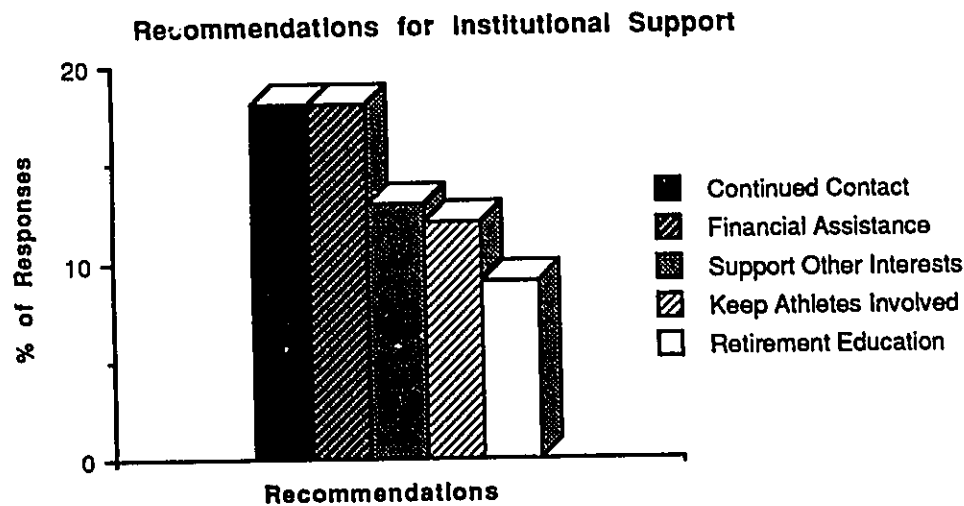


Figure 5

finances, athletes felt that financial assistance was justified not only for athletes going back to school within a specific time frame following retirement, but for all athletes.

Other recommendations offered by the athletes to the various sport institutions regarding athlete retirement include allowing or encouraging athletes to pursue other interests while on the national team rather than discouraging a balance of activities (13% of responses), keeping athletes involved in the national organization as a coaching or administrative resource (12% of responses), and offering retirement education programs to athletes while they have national team status or during their transition from sport (9% of responses).

2) Does the type of transition (planned/unplanned) influence how the athlete moves through the transition process?

The MANOVA performed on transition type and transition characteristics revealed a significant effect, $F(14,99)=4.86, p < .0001$. Subsequent univariate F tests for this interaction were significant for four variables:

- How, $F(1,112)=7.79, p < 0.006$
- Degree 1 (Finances), $F(1,112)=9.92, p < 0.002$
- Degree 7 (Job/school pressures), $F(1,112)=7.38, p < 0.008$
- Degree 10 (Relationship difficulties with coach/organization), $F(1,112)=25.69, p < 0.000$.

That is, planned transitions (e.g., planned retirement) engendered fewer problems with finances, fewer problems with job or school pressures, fewer difficulties with the coaching staff, and a more positive life change than unplanned transitions. Results of the multivariate analysis are provided in Table 8.

Table 8
Summary of Multivariate Analysis Examining the Effects of Transition Type on Transition Characteristics

Transition Characteristics (N=114)
Multivariate $F(14,99)= 4.8578, p<.0001$

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	Planned (n=47)		Unplanned (n=67)		<u>Univariate F</u>
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	
Change	4.2	0.9	4.0	0.9	1.4935
How	2.2	0.8	2.5	1.0	7.7926*
Stressor	3.3	1.4	3.1	1.4	1.3019
Degree -					
Feeling incompetent	2.2	1.3	2.0	1.1	0.5872
Finances	2.1	1.3	3.0	1.4	9.9163*
Illness in family	1.4	1.1	1.3	0.9	0.2369
Injury	1.5	1.0	2.0	1.5	4.3969
Loss of status	2.1	1.3	2.5	1.2	2.9788
Missing social aspect	2.6	1.3	3.0	1.2	3.2667
Job/school pressures	2.4	1.3	3.0	1.2	7.3776*
Personal illness	1.1	0.3	1.4	1.0	5.9119
Lack self confidence	2.0	1.2	2.0	1.3	0.0338
Difficulties -					
coach/association	1.8	1.2	3.2	1.6	25.6882*
family/friends	1.4	0.9	1.4	0.8	0.3073

* Degrees of freedom =1,112, $p<.01$
 Direction of 5 point scale is positive (no problem) to negative (big problem)

The results of the MANOVA examining type and individual characteristics revealed no significant main effect (Table 9). The MANOVA conducted on type and environment characteristics showed a significant effect, $F(8,101)=2.48, p<.05$. Subsequent univariate F tests for this interaction were significant for the variable Coach — $F(1,108)=6.98, p<0.009$. That is, athletes who planned their transitions received more support from their coach during the transition than athletes who did not plan their retirement. Results of the multivariate analysis are provided in Table 10.

Table 9
Summary of Multivariate Analysis Examining the Effects of Transition
Type on Individual Characteristics

Individual Characteristics (N=109)
Multivariate $F(14,94)= 1.0197, ns.$

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	Planned (n=44)		Unplanned (n=65)	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Outlook	1.7	0.7	1.7	0.9
Deal -				
Laughing	3.6	1.4	3.2	1.4
Drinking/drugs	4.8	0.7	4.7	0.6
Finding another focus	1.8	1.1	1.7	1.0
Crying	4.4	1.1	4.1	1.3
Ignoring difficulties	4.7	0.6	4.6	0.8
Keeping busy	2.0	0.9	2.0	1.0
Keeping feelings in	4.3	1.0	4.0	1.1
Readings	4.1	1.3	4.4	1.1
Staying in touch	2.6	1.4	2.9	1.4
Talking	2.4	1.4	2.5	1.4
Training/exercising	2.3	1.3	1.9	1.1
Career counselling	4.4	1.2	4.6	0.9
Personal counselling	4.7	1.0	4.6	1.0

Direction of 5 point scale is positive (very helpful) to negative (never used or not helpful)

Table 10
Summary of Multivariate Analysis Examining the Effects of Transition
Type on Environment Characteristics

Environment Characteristics (N=110)
Multivariate $F(8,101)= 2.4775, p<.05$

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	Planned (n=43)		Unplanned (n=67)		<u>Univariate E</u>
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	
Support -					
Spouse/mate	2.2	1.5	2.5	1.5	0.6062
Other family	2.4	1.6	2.7	1.6	0.4736
Teammates	3.6	1.3	3.9	1.3	1.2147
Other friends	3.2	1.5	2.9	1.3	1.0744
Coach	3.9	1.5	4.5	1.1	6.9797*
National Organization	4.4	1.0	4.6	0.9	1.0269
Olympic Career Center	4.5	1.1	4.5	1.0	0.0284
Sport Canada	4.3	1.3	4.7	0.8	6.1367

* Degrees of freedom = 1,108, $p<.01$

Direction of 5 point scale is positive (none or little support) to negative (much support)

The chi-square tests of independence conducted for those categorical variables not included in the MANOVA's did not reveal any statistically significant associations. Table 11 presents the results of the cross tabulations.

Table 11
Summary of Chi-Square Analyses Examining the Effects of Transition Type on Transition Process Variables

<u>Variable</u>	<u>$\chi^2(df)$</u>	<u><i>p</i></u>
Before	0.49(1)	0.49
Duration	2.25(2)	0.32
Adapt	6.61(4)	0.16
Interest	0.48(1)	0.49
Involved	0.02(1)	0.90

3) *Does the balance of each individual's coping assets and liabilities relate to the outcome of the transition?*

The only significant result of the loglinear analyses was found for the main effect of Block 1 on Feel ($z=2.0939$) and Transit ($z=3.6229$). That is, those athletes who progressed through the transition process with more transition related assets than liabilities felt more satisfied about their lives since retirement and felt they handled their transitions much better than those athletes possessing more liabilities than assets. A summary of the cross-classifications associated with the significant effects in the loglinear analyses are presented in Table 12.

Table 12
Summary of Cross-Classifications Associated with the Significant Effects
in the Loglinear Analyses Examining the Impact of Transition Interaction
on Outcome

Block 1 by Feel (N=198)

Block 1	Count Total %	Feel 1	2	3	4	Row Total
<i>Liability</i>	1	19 9.6	21 10.6	40 20.2	22 11.1	102
<i>Asset</i>	2	2 1.0	9 4.5	23 11.6	62 31.3	96
Column Total		21 10.6	30 15.2	63 31.8	84 42.2	198 100.0

Block 1 by Transit (N=198)

Block 1	Count Total %	Transit 1	2	3	4	Row Total
<i>Liability</i>	1	27 13.6	30 15.2	35 17.7	10 5.1	102
<i>Asset</i>	2	2 1.0	21 10.6	27 13.6	46 23.2	96
Column Total		29 14.6	51 25.8	62 31.3	56 28.3	198 100.0

4) What other relationships influence an individual's adjustment to transition?

The following results should be interpreted with caution due to the possibility that the large number of chi-square tests generated some significant associations simply by chance.

Transition Variables and Outcome. Results of these chi-square analyses are presented in Table 13. Those athletes who reported that achieving their goals was an important reason for retiring tended to feel satisfied about life and handled their transition well in comparison to those who indicated that achieving their goals was a moderate or unimportant reason initiating their retirement.

Table 13
Chi-Square Values for Retirement Reasons (Trigger)
by Outcome Variables

Trigger	Feel	Transit
Achieved goals	15.4 *	12.37 *
Difficulties with coach	2.76	6.96
Difficulties with NSO	3.74	8.14
Found a job	1.7	2.71
Injury	1.77	3.67
Lack of finances	6.51	6.08
Lack of support	4.27	3.97
Not selected to team	1.7	14.79 *
Declining skill	4.44	2.69
Tired of circuit	3.49	2.25
Time for relationship	0.6	2.07

* df=4, p<.05

Those who reported that not being selected to the team was of moderate importance in their decision to retire seemed to handle the transition from high performance sport the most poorly as compared with those who found not being selected to the team as either a very important or unimportant reason for retiring.

Transition type was thought to influence outcome, therefore this possible relationship was examined through cross tabulations. The analysis for type and transit indicated a significant departure from independence, $\chi^2(4, N=114)=13.14, p<.05$. Specifically, individuals who experienced a planned transition tended to handle the transition much better than those who experience an unplanned transition.

Transition Process Characteristics and Outcome. Table 14 displays the results of these chi-square analyses. Those athletes who had retired at least once before tended to feel more dissatisfied about their lives since retirement than those who had not retired previously.

Those individuals who experienced a negative life change due to retirement tended to feel more dissatisfied about life and also tended to handle their transition more poorly than those who experienced a positive change through retirement.

Those who had not adapted to retirement at the time of the study tended to feel more dissatisfied with their lives than those who had made the adjustment. Athletes who had taken more than 2 years to adapt tended to handle their transition more poorly than others.

Those athletes who had achieved their sport-related goals tended to feel more satisfied and handled their transition well as compared with those who had not accomplished their goals or achieved only some of them.

Those individuals who experienced much stress following retirement tended to handle their transition more poorly than those who faced some or little stress.

Table 14
Chi-Square Values for Transition Process Variables
by Outcome Variables

		Feel	Transit
Transition Characteristics	Before	6.31 *	5.53
	Duration	5.84	7.79
	Change	6.01	4.89
	How	75.5 *	59.45 *
	Adapt	31.71 *	42.13 *
	Stressor	7.9	29.82 *
	Degree -		
	Feeling incompetent	21.3 *	22.64 *
	Finances	7.8	4.03
	Family illness	18.29 *	2.14
	Injury	10.56 *	6.09
	Loss of status	13.76 *	29.71 *
	Missing social aspect	8.43	25.1 *
	Job/school pressures	8.25	10.63 *
	Personal illness	4.64	17.6 *
	Lack self-confidence	12.24 *	39.55 *
	Diff. with coach	2.07	2.34
	Diff. with family	5.15	7.95
Individual Characteristics	Sex	2.64	0.66
	Commit	8.17	5.52
	National	6.6	2.3
	Retire	4	11.04
	Goals	11.6 *	15.1
	Outlook	105.2 *	29.96 *
	Deal -		
	Laughing	5.23	0.89
	Drinking/drugs	4.14	7.46
	Another focus	14.67 *	3.25
	Crying	3.44	4.94
	Ignoring difficulties	8.59	9.32
	Keeping busy	17.54 *	12.24 *
	Feelings to self	3	3.34
	Readings	3.94	1
	Contact with sport	4.03	6.57
	Talking	6.86	3.24
	Training/exercise	3.52	2.7
	Career counselling	2.46	1.78
	Personal counselling	7.9	8.07
Environment Characteristics	Support -		
	Spouse/boy/girlfriend	7.84	5.95
	Other family	8.85	8.75
	Teammates	5.54	4.99
	Other friends	5.91	5.32
	Coach	8.93	6.1
	Sport organization	4.4	11.07 *
	Olympic Career Centre	1.85	1.39
	Sport Canada	3.36	7.7
	Interest	18.43 √	10.27 √
	Involved	5.14	1.06

√ df=2, p<.05

* df=4, p<.05

Upon retirement, those athletes who had problems with feelings of incompetence in other activities tended to be more dissatisfied about life and handled their transition more poorly than those who encountered few if any problems in this area. Those who had great difficulty with personal illness tended to handle their transition more poorly than those who had few if any difficulties with illness.

Athletes who encountered few if any difficulties with loss of status tended to feel more satisfied with their lives than those who faced moderate or great difficulty with loss of status. Athletes who had great difficulty with loss of status tended to handle their transition the most poorly compared to those who encountered moderate or no difficulties. Those who did not report problems with missing the social aspect of their sport tended to handle their transition more successfully than those who reported moderate or great difficulties with the social aspect. Individuals who did not experience a lack of self confidence following retirement tended to feel more satisfied with their lives than those who encountered moderate or great problems with self confidence. Those who encountered great difficulties with a lack of self confidence tended to handle their transition from high performance sport more poorly than those who had moderate or no difficulties with self confidence.

Those who experienced some or moderate problems with family illness following retirement were more dissatisfied than those who either had no problems at all or had considerable problems with family illness. Those who faced moderate problems with injury following retirement tended to feel most dissatisfied about life compared to those groups who either did not have injury related problems or who had great difficulties with injury. The group of athletes who reported moderate problems with job or school related pressures also felt neutral about the way they handled their transition (e.g., they handled it neither poorly nor well).

Those athletes who had a generally positive outlook on life felt more satisfied about their lives than did those possessing a negative or neutral outlook. Those who had a

generally negative outlook on life tended to handle their transition more poorly than those possessing a positive or neutral outlook.

Athletes who felt that the coping strategy of finding another focus of interest was not helpful tended to feel more dissatisfied than those who found this strategy of moderate or great help. Athletes who felt that the coping strategy of keeping busy was not helpful tended not only to feel more dissatisfied about life but also felt that they handled their transitions more poorly than those who did find the strategy of moderate or great help.

Athletes who handled their transition well tended to get moderate support from their national sport organization compared to those who handled the adjustment process poorly or moderately well.

Those individuals who handled their transition poorly reported that they tended not to have had other interests to focus on upon retirement as compared to those who handled the transition moderately or very well. Conversely, those athletes who were satisfied with their lives since retirement tended to have had other interests or activities to move into upon retirement as compared to those who were either dissatisfied or moderately satisfied with their lives after high performance sport.

Impact of Retirement Reasons on Pertinent Variables. Results of these findings are provided in Table 15. Males tended to report finding a job and lack of finances as important reasons for retiring as compared to females.

Those athletes who retired between the ages of 14 - 20 reported finding a job, lack of finances, and wanting more time for a personal relationship to be of little or no importance as reasons for retiring compared to older athletes. Athletes 30 years of age and older indicated that being tired of the circuit influenced their decision to retire less as compared to the younger athletes.

The relationship between lack of finances as a reason for retiring and the time it takes to adapt is significant, however, the differences between groups present no striking patterns.

Table 15
Chi-Square Values for
Retirement Reasons by Transition Characteristics

	Achieved goals	Difficulties with coach	Difficulties with NSO	Found job	Injury	Lack of finances	Lack of support	Not selected to team	Declining skill	Tired of circuit	Time for relationship
Change	6.81	1	0.59	3.62	3.3	13.67*	19.72*	4.91	2.37	1.58	2.5
How	10.13*	1.63	1.26	7.71	5.32	6.11	2.83	2.64	7.16	6.29	9.81*
Adapt	8.04	14.8	3.9	11.02	13.6	15.87*	7.42	17.83*	7.58	8.37	8.88
Stressor	3.66	9.76*	4.97	2.44	0.96	10.14*	1.33	5.57	4.04	1.21	3.62
Degree											
Feeling Incompetent	2.07	2.07	1.68	1.01	1.2	4.7	2.42	3.88	4.8	7.21	1.98
Finances	0.81	1.41	1.88	8.06	1.65	63.74*	3.53	3.71	1.14	6.59	3.02
Family illness	1.04	3.19	5.89	1.93	1.91	1.21	1.87	3.42	5.73	0.97	4.6
Injury	3.12	2.75	2.1	3.69	89.84*	9.47*	0.28	2.78	2.4	5.84	1.41
Loss of status	2.33	23.29*	5.13	4.17	2.89	1.93	0.67	8.06	11.81*	1.69	6.84
Missing social aspect	3.9	3.48	1.3	8.52	4.17	5.75	1.5	6.09	4.97	2.79	1.18
Job/school pressures	1.75	5.88	4.19	6.65	3.88	14.67*	7.96	0.91	7.9	4.62	1.59
Personal illness	4.63	1.26	8.17	1.82	8.53	4.45	5.14	8.84	2.79	8.64	2.84
Lack self confidence	8.05	4.62	4.36	1.69	2.24	5.34	1.79	6.79	10.54*	3.53	5.5
Diff. with coach	5.43	94.69*	40.23*	7.33	1.23	3.48	2.54	12.16*	3.79	4.33	1.63
Diff. with family	3.75	10.51*	4.41	1.41	2.54	9.08	4.5	1.78	1.49	2.08	2.32

Chi-Square Values for
Retirement Reasons by Individual Characteristics

	Achieved goals	Difficulties with coach	Difficulties with NSO	Found job	Injury	Lack of finances	Lack of support	Not selected to team	Declining skill	Tired of circuit	Time for relationship
Sex	0	5.75	1.27	1.1	2.17	14.39	5.28	1.15	1.12	2.77	4.47
Commit	6.12	5.9	11.3	6.72	7.83	6.87	4.28	5.69	3.95	5.68	4.04
National	2.52	1.99	3.58	10.44	10.85	2.97	6.08	7.84	6.71	8.09	4.33
Retire	6.86	7.56	4.5	14.39	8.55	18.47	1.81	5.43	7.5	14.21	19.26

† df=2, p<.05
 * df=4, p<.05
 † df=6, p<.05
 * df=8, p<.05

Again, a definite pattern is lacking between the reason of not being selected to the team and adaptation time.

Those who retired largely due to difficulties with their national sport organization tended to have more problems with their organization following retirement than those who attached little or moderate importance to this reason for retiring. Those who retired largely due to injury seemed to experience the greatest problems with injury in retirement compared to those to whom injury was of little or moderate importance as a reason for retirement. Athletes retiring largely due to declining personal performance tended to experience the most problems with loss of status and a lack in self confidence in the months following retirement as compared to those who did not experience or attach much if any importance to that particular retirement reason.

Those who attached moderate importance to retiring due to difficulties with the coaching staff, tended to experience the least stress following retirement, found loss of status to be a moderate problem, and also tended to have the least problems with family or friend relationships compared to those who attributed little or great importance to coach difficulties as a reason for retiring. Those who attached little importance to coach difficulties as a reason for retirement seemed to encounter fewer problems with the coach or organization in retirement than those who experienced moderate or considerable problems with the coach while competing.

Athletes who reported that a lack of finances was a very important reason for retiring tended to have more problems with finances and job or school pressures in retirement than those who did not see finances as an important reason to stop competing. Those who attached moderate importance to retiring due to lack of finances also encountered moderate stress following retirement as compared to those who found finances either important or unimportant. Results indicate a significant relationship between retiring due to lack of finances and injury problems in retirement although the distribution patterns for each group are too similar to determine where the differences lie.

Those who reported that not being selected to the team was of little or no importance in initiating their retirement seemed to face the least difficulty with their coach or organization following retirement compared to those who felt this reason was of moderate or great importance in influencing their retirement.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the applicability of Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) conceptual model of transition to the domain of high performance sport. Overall, the results indicated support for this model. A secondary purpose of this study was to explore the implications of transition in the sport context. The results are discussed in relation to the two purposes that were established for this study. Finally, implications for future research in athletic transition are discussed.

Model Applicability

The results of the multivariate analyses concerning transition type provided partial support for Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) postulate that the type of transition an individual experiences influences the way that individual moves through the transition process. Athletes who planned their retirement received more support from their coaches during the transition; had significantly fewer problems in the months following retirement; and encountered a more positive life change as a result of retirement than those who had not planned their retirement. It is likely that those who retired for planned reasons were able to anticipate and mentally prepare for their upcoming adjustment. These individuals may have been able to ensure that financial concerns were taken care of and that employment and/or educational opportunities were secured prior to leaving national team and/or carded status. A planned retirement setting appeared to be more conducive to a smooth and quick adjustment. Charner and Schlossberg (1986) concur with this notion that planned transitions are considered to be an asset in coping.

Conversely, those who found themselves facing an unexpected retirement appeared to be less prepared or less ready for the change. This notion is supported by the findings of several studies. Pearlin (1980), in his study of life strains (transitions) and coping resources, found that unanticipated transitions are more apt to involve crises and a higher degree of change and thus are more likely to lead to a more negative life change than a scheduled retirement. Similarly, Reynolds (1981) in his study of retired professional football players, found that involuntary transition was related to lower self-esteem. In the high performance athlete research, Milhovilovic's (1968) findings showed that those individual's who were "forced out" demonstrated adjustment problems.

In addition to moving through the transition process more smoothly, those who experienced a planned retirement also handled their transition better than athletes who experienced an unplanned retirement. This is likely because planning for a transition allows one to feel more in control.

The loglinear analyses concerning the interactions of the transition process on adjustment outcome also provided partial support for Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) transition model. Findings indicated that athletes high on assets relating to transition characteristics (e.g., life change, degree of stress, and difficulties encountered in transition) were more satisfied about their lives in retirement and felt more in control of their progress through the transition than those athletes who were high in liabilities related to transition characteristics. Charner and Schlossberg (1986) state that coping effectiveness is best examined and explained by measuring both the assets and liabilities within an individual's makeup. In accordance with this, Charner and Schlossberg postulated that the balance of each individual's coping assets and liabilities determines the outcome of any transition. Thus, the results this study support the notion that coping effectiveness is enhanced when resources outweigh deficits (Charner & Schlossberg, 1986; Schlossberg, 1984).

Interestingly, the significant results supporting phase one of Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model (effect of type of transition on how one moves through retirement) are

confined to transition and environment characteristics only. The type of transition experienced had an effect on how the athlete perceived the impact of retirement and how much support he or she received while moving through the transition but did not influence the coping strategies used. It is possible that transition type simply has no impact on the selection and use of coping strategies. However, it is also possible that trends toward significance regarding individual characteristics may have been hidden somewhat by instrument design. That is, the questions in the ARQ designed to tap the area of the individual may not have adequately done so. Therefore, further exploration and refinement of the instrument may be advantageous.

Results supporting phase two of the model (how the balance of one's coping assets and liabilities influence adjustment outcome) relate to those variables characterizing the transition only. This is contrary to Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) postulate that it is never one group of variables by itself that makes the difference between a smooth or rough transition but rather the way the groups of variables interrelate. However, in this study, no interaction between the three major groups of variables (e.g., transition, individual, and environment characteristics) was found as only transition characteristics appeared to influence adjustment.

One explanation for these findings relating to adjustment (phase two) may be that those variables that characterize the transition (e.g., life change, degree of stress, difficulties encountered in transition, support networks, etc.) most effectively filter, mediate and intervene between an individual's retirement and his/her adjustment outcome. In other words, the individual's assessment of the circumstances surrounding his/her retirement is more likely to indicate the type of transition experienced and how one will adjust than the coping strategies used or the support received.

Another plausible explanation is that Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) postulate that it is never one group of variables by itself that makes the difference in adjustment, is

inaccurate. The authors' use of the word "never" is quite possibly overstated especially considering the exploratory nature of their research.

In terms of measuring an individual's balance of coping assets and liabilities, this study utilized a different approach than had previously been used. Charner & Schlossberg (1986), in their previous work, utilized a transition instrument in an attempt to identify each individual's balance of assets and liabilities by having the individual rate each variable of the transition process as a plus, minus, or mixed. The investigator feels that this method for obtaining an asset/liability balance score is limited in that, as stated by Chiriboga and Lowenthal (1975), one strong resource or asset (e.g., a best friend) can negate or outweigh many liabilities. In an attempt to stabilize this "balance" score, this study used an averaged score and thus obtained a more global measure of each individual's assets and liabilities. Perhaps this study's method of analyzing the balance of assets and liabilities using the global measure is more appropriate than previously done.

As a result of the findings of this study, a theoretical model specific to retirement from sport can be put forth for future testing. The modified model presented in the review of literature (page 36) has been slightly altered to establish a more precise model of the individual in transition. In future research, specific variables regarding the athletic biographies of the individual respondents that may be meaningful to the interpretation of results are: 1) knowledge of the athlete's sport; 2) time committed to the national team; 3) level of expertise; 4) achievement of sport-related goals; 5) performance results; and 6) age at retirement. These variables are housed within the Background Information block of the model. This modified, sport specific version of Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model may further contribute to transition theory in general and more specifically to transition in the context of high performance sport.

Implications of Transition in the High Performance Sport Setting

It is interesting to note that other relationships not explicitly framed by the model were found to impact on individual's transition experience. The chi-square analyses indicated that numerous variables were related to one of the two outcome variables (e.g., feel or transit) but only a few significant relationships included both of these variables measuring outcome.

Results indicated that positive adjustment to retirement from high performance sport was related to achieving one's sport related goals or retiring because one had achieved one's goals in sport. That is, athletes who accomplished what they had set out to do in sport (e.g., achieve a specific performance time or make the Olympic team) or retired with satisfaction and on their own terms tended to adjust smoothly. These findings are supported by Werthner and Orlick (1986) who found that feeling a sense of accomplishment (e.g., satisfying one's personal goals) contributed to a smooth transition out of sport.

Similarly, a general profile for negative adjustment also emerged. Athletes who were more dissatisfied with their lives as a result of retirement and felt less in control of their transition tended to find the transition a negative occurrence, tended to have significant problems with feeling incompetent outside of their sport, and tended to feel that keeping busy was not a viable or effective coping strategy.

Athletes who felt their retirement was largely due to declining performance experienced more difficulties with lack of self confidence, and feelings of loss of status than those who did not retire for this reason. These findings provide further support for Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model in that unplanned or unanticipated transitions lead to decreased coping effectiveness. More specifically, when an athlete no longer performs to his/her "normal" capabilities, he/she will likely tend to attribute the lesser performance to personal failure. Not being able to compete with the same intensity or skill may be perceived as a breakdown in overall abilities and thus may impact upon one's sense of self. Thus,

athletes feel they are no longer capable of maintaining their elite status and perhaps not capable of doing anything well.

Males, as compared to females, tended to report finding a job and a lack of finances as important reasons for retiring. These two differences are in all probability due to gender role socialization rather than a characteristic inherent in retirement. Therefore, the most striking result regarding sex differences was that very few were found.

Findings indicated that athletes who had retired before tended to feel more dissatisfied about their lives since retirement as compared to those who had not made a previous transition. Schlossberg (1984) supports this result by stating that failing to adapt well to a situation may negatively influence one's ability to cope with a similar situation in the future as a self-fulfilling prophecy may interfere. That is, if an athlete retires but subsequently returns to international competition, he/she likely encountered difficulties with the transition otherwise he/she would not have rejoined the national team. Consequently, the athlete may become less able to cope with retirement in the future. Therefore, retiring from sport more than once is considered a liability rather than an asset.

Athletes who have options in terms of employment, interests, or relationships to focus on after retirement are better equipped to negotiate a smooth transition than athletes who have no options at all (Charner & Schlossberg, 1986; Schlossberg, 1984; Werthner & Orlick; 1986). This issue of options being a positive factor in adjustment is reflected in this study as high performance athletes who were satisfied with their lives since retiring appeared to have had other interests or activities to move into upon retirement. It would therefore seem most important that athletes maintain a balance in their lives while active members of the national team.

The choice of counsellor athletes would consult for assistance if they were having a difficult time with stress in retirement provided timely results. Many athletes felt that if they were going to consult a professional, that professional would be a sport psychologist or a sportpsych consultant rather than another type of psychologist (e.g., clinical

psychologist; psychiatrist; university counsellor; etc.). This finding appears to send an important message to the profession of applied sport psychology with regard to its growing debate on certification procedures and who possesses the expertise to provide intervention instruction. Knowledge of the subdisciplines of applied sport psychology and of the sport structure in general are criteria perceived to be important by many high performance athletes as indicators of competence.

Previous research (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Coakley, 1983; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986; Wertner & Orlick, 1986) has indicated that retirement from high performance sport is an experience engendering either crisis or relief in the lives of former athletes. While virtually all individuals experience adjustment to some degree following any transition (Coakley, 1983; George, 1980; Schlossberg, 1984), this study reveals that adjustment to retirement from high performance sport may not be as distressing or as liberating as previously thought.

The majority of athletes in this study felt retirement had changed their lives in a positive direction, felt positive about life in general, satisfied about their lives since retirement, and felt in control of their adjustment process. It would thus appear that a larger portion of the athlete population than previously thought progressed through the transition process smoothly without specialized assistance.

These findings are a departure from previous studies on retirement from high performance sport possibly because this study represents a comparatively larger, broader base of national team members. Previous studies (Baillie, 1990; Swain, 1989; Werthner and Orlick, 1986) tended to deal only with a select group of world ranked, internationally elite athletes, or anecdotes from a small number of professional athletes. That is, athletes who are at the top of their profession tend to have dedicated a large portion of their lives to training and competing. This commitment in terms of time and personal energies often contributes to an imbalance of activities in their lives. Unfortunately, this sport-only

identity may leave the athlete with few skills other than those perfected as an athlete and the resulting lack of options can lead to adjustment difficulty.

Even though most athletes experienced a somewhat non-eventful adjustment from elite sport, they did appear to progress through an adjustment phase during their transition as many generally encountered a great change in their lives, a moderate degree of stress, and moderate difficulties with specific issues as a result of retirement. Ogilvie and Howe's (1986) work supports this notion of adjustment by stating that each athlete faces a period of adjustment during the transition to former athlete.

A number of implications arise. Most athletes made the adjustment to a new focus without major difficulties, however, it took time to do so. This would indicate that most athletes could benefit from an abbreviated transition process. An expeditious transition process via intervention would likely enable more athletes to make the transition from athlete to former athlete quickly and smoothly.

Future Directions

All transitions are followed by a period of disruption in which old routines, assumptions and relationships change and new ones evolve (Schlossberg, 1989). In sport, it appears as though most organizations have not paid the same attention to helping athletes move out of the organizational structure as they have to helping them move in. Nor has any organization developed a detailed conceptualization of what is effective in helping athletes move smoothly and quickly through the transition process. Thus, it seems prudent that future research in the area of transition from high performance sport should begin to focus on the implementation of positive interventions not only to improve the transition experience but to minimize the time it takes to adjust.

Several recommendations for intervention, or strategies for change, are evident:

- 1) Continue financial support for a year following retirement. Athletes feel this would be most beneficial for many because they would be able to continue their education uninterrupted, begin a degree program, or find suitable employment.
- 2) Offer seminars dealing with adjustment issues. Athletes feel it would be helpful if they were informed about what emotions to expect, when to expect them, and for how long; what coping strategies are most effective; and from whom to seek support. Former high performance athletes would be a useful resource for sharing knowledge and participating in such seminars. Ideally such exchanges would begin during the athlete's competitive career. Realistically, however, most of these exchanges may have to occur when close to retirement or upon retirement as many athletes may reject the serious discussion of retirement issues while still actively competing.

Findings from this study show that these seminars should stress the importance of the athlete making his/her own decision to retire and should inform the athlete of the need to maintain a balanced life throughout one's competitive career in preparation for the inevitable — retirement.

- 3) Provide opportunities to contribute in the sport system. Former athletes are a valuable resource in terms of their specific sport knowledge with respect to skill, technique, and strategy. Their expertise is invaluable to continued coaching depth. National sport organizations should seek out former athletes for coaching positions or other roles that would benefit from their experience.
- 4) Provide a practical resource center for athletes. An athlete resource center capable of directing or connecting athletes to the desired service should be operable. This center could coordinate and provide seminars, workshops, and sportpsych consultation to interested athletes.
- 5) Encourage national sport organizations to maintain contact with retired athletes. Often retirement does not diminish athletes' interest in their sport or their desire to be involved in

some capacity. One of the difficulties that athletes acknowledged in this study was that they missed the social aspect of their sport. Many were unhappy with the fact that once they retired they were no longer considered members of their organization eligible for team updates or inclusion in various functions. National sport organizations should continue contact with their former athletes by such simple means as newsletters, invitations to organization related functions, or by requesting input or assistance from the athletes.

In summary, the overall findings of this study suggest that with slight modifications, Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model of the individual in transition furnishes a new and useful theoretical framework for analyzing the transition from high performance sport. Neither Charner and Schlossberg's (1986) model nor the empirical methods used to investigate the usefulness of the model were previously studied in the context of sport. This particular conceptual model has highlighted the viewing of transition from high performance sport as an individually perceived occurrence rather than as an event having the same impact on each individual. It is suggested that future research draw from the modified, sport specific model of the athlete in transition presented in this study; and on positive intervention programs for transitional athletes to further our understanding of the nature of transition and to positively guide the adjustment process.

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Appendix A

Athlete Retirement Questionnaire (ARQ)

ATHLETE RETIREMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

■ *Questions 1-14 deal with specific aspects of your national team career.*

1. National Team Sport: _____
2. Present Age: _____
3. Sex: female male
4. How many years did you compete in your sport? (at any level) _____
5. How many years were you a member of the national team? _____
6. For how many years was your commitment to your athletic career a full-time pursuit? _____
7. At what level(s) did you compete? (check all that apply)
 - Olympics
 - World Championships
 - World Cup Events
 - Touring Teams
8. Please list your best performance results: (fill in appropriate columns)

	Competition(s)	Individual Placing	Team Placing
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
9. When did you retire from the national team? (month/year) _____
10. a. At what age did you retire? _____
b. At that time, were you married or involved in a serious relationship?
 - yes no
11. Did you accomplish your personal goals in your sport?
 - yes no

Explain: _____

16. How long did it take for you to feel totally adapted to your new situation out of high performance sport? (check a box)

- almost immediately (within 1 or 2 months)
- 6 months
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- more than 3 years
- not totally adapted yet

17. How much stress did you generally feel in your life while you were a member of the national team? (circle a number)

1	2	3	4	5
very little stress				a great deal of stress

18. a. How much stress did you generally feel during the first 6 or 8 months following retirement? (circle a number)

1	2	3	4	5
very little stress				a great deal of stress

b. To what degree were any of the following a problem for you? (circle a number for each)

	1	2	3	4	5
	no problem			big problem	
Feeling incompetent in activities other than sport..	1	2	3	4	5
Finances	1	2	3	4	5
Illness in family	1	2	3	4	5
Injury	1	2	3	4	5
Loss of status	1	2	3	4	5
Missing social aspect of sport	1	2	3	4	5
Job/school pressures	1	2	3	4	5
Personal illness	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of self confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Relationship difficulties:					
with coach/association	1	2	3	4	5
with family/friends	1	2	3	4	5
Other _____	1	2	3	4	5

22 a. When you retired, did you have something of interest to get involved or absorbed in right away? (e.g., a job, school, a relationship, hobbies...)

- yes no

b. If yes, was this an activity you had been involved in while on the national team?

- yes no

23. Which of the following are significant factors in your life today?
(check all that apply)

- Developing/maintaining an important relationship
- Part-time employment
- Full-time employment
- Raising a family/homemaker
- Seeking full-time employment
- Furthering my education
- Reflecting on my past sport career
- Training/working out
- Trying to get back on the team
- Watching T.V.
- Other _____

Explain/Comment : _____

24. How does your current situation compare with your national team experience in terms of its importance to you? (circle a number)

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|------|---|---------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| much less important | | same | | much more important |

25. In general, how do you feel about your life since retirement? (circle a number)

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| very dissatisfied | | | | very satisfied |

26. In general, how did you handle your transition out of sport? (circle a number)

1	2	3	4	5
very poorly				very well

27. While on the national team, approximately how many hours per week, on average, did you put into physical training and mental preparation (e.g., setting short and long term goals, imaging successful performances, preparing training and competition plans, watching videos of your performances, etc...) for your sport?

	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	Over 30
Physical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. Now, in retirement:

a) how physically active are you? (check box for hrs/wk)

0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	Over 15
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

b) how much time do you spend mentally preparing for your new focus or interest (e.g., setting short and long term goals, preparing plans to achieve your goals, imaging successful performance, etc...)? (check box for hrs/wk)

0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	Over 15
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

■ *Questions 29-34 are intended to find out what types of retirement services would benefit Canadian athletes.*

29. Did/do you use the services offered by the Olympic Athlete Career Centre?

yes no

Why or why not? _____

30. Which of the following services would have been of interest to you during your sports career and when you retired? (check all that apply)

	Interested during sports career	Interested during retirement	Not at all interested
Opportunities to help you focus on finding a new career or interest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities to help you learn to transfer your mental skills to a new career or interest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Suggestions to help you feel more confident or competent in your new surroundings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial assistance.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information on job and educational opportunities ..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physiological and dietary detraining program.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Readings on how other athletes have dealt with retirement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seminars with other retired athletes to share and learn from each others experiences.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

31. If you were having a difficult time with stress in retirement who, if anyone, would you consult for assistance? (check all that apply)

- A sport psychologist
- Another type of psychologist or counsellor
- Neither

32. a. If a seminar or a series of seminars dealing with retirement issues was available, would you have been interested in going?

- yes no

b. If yes, where would the seminars have had to take place for you to go? (check all that apply)

- In my city
- In my region of the province
- In my province
- Anywhere
- Other _____

33. Do you have any suggestions that may help other high performance athletes with their transition process?

34. Do you have any suggestions for Sport Canada, your National Sport Organization, or National coaches regarding athlete retirement (e.g., what they could do to help athletes through the transition)?

Appendix B

List of Variables and Location in ARQ

Model-Related Variables	Question Number in ARQ
Trigger	12
Before	13
Duration	14
Change	15a
How	15b
Adapt	16
Stressor	18a
Degree	18b
Sport	1
Age	2
Sex	3
Compete	4
National	5
Commitment	6
Level	7
Competition	8
Year	9
Retire	10a
Married	10b
Goals	11
Outlook	19
Deal	20
Support	21
Interest	22a
Involved	22b
Feel	25
Transit	26
Exploratory Variables	
Stress	17
Factor	23
Current	24
Preparation	27
Now	28
Services	29
Career	30
Consultant	31
Seminar	32a
Place	32b
High Performance	33
Sport Organization	34

Appendix C

Cover Letter



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES DE LA SANTÉ
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

February 14, 1990

Dear

We are continually trying to enhance our knowledge with respect to how we can help athletes make a positive transition from sport.

As a former member of the Canadian National Team, your personal experiences and input are most important as they can teach us a great deal about sport retirement. The enclosed questionnaire has been developed to find out how retirement effects elite athletes and what can be done to assist athletes with their transition to a new career or focus.

We would greatly appreciate your cooperation in completing and returning this questionnaire within the next day or two. It is anonymous, confidential and will take about 20 minutes of your time. If you would like a copy of the results of the study, please do not hesitate to contact us through the University or at (613) 238-6832. Thank you very much, your thoughts and comments will be most helpful.

Sincerely,

Dr. Terry Orlick

Dana Sinclair

ÉCOLE DES SCIENCES DE L'ACTIVITÉ PHYSIQUE
SCHOOL OF HUMAN KINETICS **100**

125 UNIVERSITÉ/UNIVERSITY, OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA K1N 6N5
+ 1 (613) 564-5920 FAX: + 1 (613) 564-7689

Appendix D

Follow-up Letter



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES DE LA SANTÉ
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

March 26, 1990

Several weeks ago you received a questionnaire dealing with your retirement from high performance sport. We have already received much constructive and insightful feedback.

If you have already returned the questionnaire - thank you very much. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. If you have not yet returned your questionnaire please do so right away. We very much want and need your input. Please call (collect) 613-238-6832 if you need another copy of the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

T. Orlick
Terry Orlick

D. Sinclair
Dana Sinclair

ÉCOLE DES SCIENCES DE L'ACTIVITÉ PHYSIQUE
SCHOOL OF HUMAN KINETICS **102**

125 UNIVERSITÉ/UNIVERSITY, OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA K1N 6N5
+ 1 (613) 564-5920 FAX: + 1 (613) 564-7689