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The Impact of Transition Out of Intercollegiate Athletics

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THE IMPACT OF TRANSITION OUT OF INTERCOLLEIGATE ATHLETICS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

by
Leslie A. Moreland-Bishop
August 2009

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

The college years are formative in adolescents’ identity development, for intercollegiate athletes, the identity is “athlete”. The extent an athlete relates to an athletic identity may play a role in behaviors, attitudes, and ultimately the transition from athlete to non-athlete. In this study, the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale, the Exhausted Eligibility Retirement Scale, and a demographic instrument were administered to student-athletes from a mid-sized public, land-grant university who had exhausted their athletic eligibility in the 2007-2008 academic year (N=53). Results indicated that athletes with a stronger athletic identity scored higher on the exhausted eligibility transition scale, suggesting the transition to non-athlete is easier. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sub-sample (N=15) to further explore the transition. The interviews revealed a theme of transition that suggests former athletes are excited to experience the life of a traditional college student, yet experienced a sense of loss of identity, social network, structure, and motivation.
DEDICATION

To my husband, David, thank you for all your support and for continuing to keeping me motivated.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The successful completion of this academic achievement is a result of the encouragement and support of many people. I would like to first thank my advisor, Dr. Denise Anderson for all of the time and energy she contributed to my many edits, advice, moral support, and above all, her friendship; I feel privileged to be your first mentee. I thank Dr. Tony Cawthon for his guidance and depth of knowledge about college student. I thank Dr. Dart Schmalz for her support and Dr. Bonnie Stevens for her continued encouragement. I thank Dr. Terry Don Phillips for his expertise in the field of athletics and for supporting me furthering my education. I would also like to thank my colleagues at Vickery Hall for allowing me the opportunity and encouraging me throughout the pursuit of this degree. I thank my fellow graduate students for their camaraderie and for making this academic venture more fun. I also thank the student-athletes who so willingly participated in this study.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Rationale for the Study

Each year thousands of collegiate men and women participate in intercollegiate athletics. For the majority of this group, it is an honor to be recognized as a member of a given team for a four year period. Many student-athletes have dreamed of earning an athletic scholarship and having the opportunity to continue competing in their chosen sport at the intercollegiate level. With the exhaustion of athletic eligibility, students begin to transition from current membership within this group to a past membership. This transition can be experienced as a life stressor due to the fact that most college athletes began participating in athletics at a young age and the social identity of “athlete” is the identity that is often forefront in the persona of a collegiate athlete. The social identity of an athlete is formulated through participation in athletic activities and is further developed through participation in intercollegiate athletics.

Because the athletic social identity is a student-athlete’s primary identity, the end of an athletic career may prove difficult for many athletes. For student-athletes, the extent to which they identify with the athletic identity is an important dimension of their self-concept (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Athletic identity can be defined as the extent to which a person identifies with the athlete role (Brewer, et al., 1993) and over time, the athletic identity is proven to strengthen (Grove, Fish, & Eklund, 2003). The time demands required of participation in intercollegiate athletics is intense and college
student-athletes often compromise academics, family, and social life to give everything in
an effort to attain peak performance in the given sport.

While National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I policy (2005)
dictates that athletes may only participate in 20 hours of structured practice per week, this
time does not include voluntary practice, team travel, community service activities, and
other team obligations. With these additional time commitments, typical Division I
student-athletes spend at least 40 to 50 hours per week participating in their given sport.
These time commitments may cause student-athletes to identify even more with their
athletic social identity. Additionally, coaches and administrators encourage a strong sense
of identification, bonding, and spirit among team members with the idea that a strong
sense of team identity increases rates of success (Klausner & Hoch, 1997). As student-
athletes spend a great amount of time in intense practice and competition with coaches
and teammates, a social network is developed and a sense of belonging and membership
is established. With a strong athletic identification, student-athletes may find it difficult to
transition to a period where athletics is no longer their central identity and role.

While all athletes know that at some point in their lives their athletic career will
end, it is often uncertain when that end will come. Many college athletes understand that
the last competition of their senior season is the last competitive experience in the sport.
However, when a playoff system is in place, there is still uncertainty as to when the last
event will occur. For many athletes, as the senior season is coming to a close, there is
hope for a professional or national team contract that will extend the playing career. Even
with a career extension through playoff games and professional careers, an athletic career
ultimately comes to an end. With the realization that an athletic career is ending comes an understanding that society tends to applaud and idolize successful athletes while neglecting former athletic stars (Botterill, 1982). While for some athletes the fame continues at the conclusion of a successful college career, for most athletes, this becomes the beginning of life without the adulation.

If athletes have been viewed by peers as an athlete for most of their life, what happens when athletes are no longer playing a sport? Many athletes have a hope of continuing their athletic career into the professional realm but in reality, it is only a small number of individuals who are successfully able to compete on the professional level. Because of this hope of continuing to play a sport, many athletes may put off readying themselves for a working career. Additionally, student-athletes may not understand that the career development cycle is a life-long process that aims to assist them in self-reflection through the exploration of self, abilities, interests, and work values. If the student-athletes do not determine, through career development, interest areas outside of athletics, when athletics comes to an end due to exhausted eligibility or injury, it is possible that the student-athletes will not know where to focus the attention that had been reserved for athletics.

College is the time in one’s life for exploration of ideas, academic disciplines, and career interests. The personal development and exploration that takes place during the college years, including identity formation, is a contributing factor in the career development process (Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989; Chickering, 1969; Lucas, 1997). The process of identity development aids in the determination of career goals and,
in turn, the exploration of career interests may aid in overall identity development (Guerra & Braungart-Rieker, 1999). In fact, Holland, Gottfredson, and Power (1980) found that those with poor identity development have greater career indecision. Participation in work activities allows for self-exploration of interests and abilities, and college students begin to determine what kind of occupation they would like to have for the long term (Arnett, 2005). Due to the time commitments of athletics, student-athletes rarely have the opportunity to work, and it is often argued that the student-athletes are working through participation in their sport, with the compensation being in the form of athletic scholarships. If student-athletes are not developing identities other than that of “athlete” and the only work opportunities are related to athletics, it is likely that as student-athletes conclude their athletic career, they will not have developed clear vocational goals and career plans.

Individuals who participate in a career development program are exposed to methods of self-exploration as well as job searching and interviewing techniques. If a career development program can offer student-athletes a smoother transition from athlete to non-athlete, it seems that it may be essential that the NCAA member institutions provide more services at the end of the student-athlete’s college career to aid in career exploration as well as athletic transition. This study seeks, in part, to determine the degree to which student-athletes have incorporated their athletic identity into their lives and if participation in career development programs can assist the student-athletes in the transition.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which intercollegiate student-athletes have developed an athletic identity and how that identity is impacted when the student-athletes sports career concludes. Additionally, the study investigated whether participation in career development programming assists student-athletes in their athletic career transition upon exhaustion of their NCAA athletic eligibility. Factors such as sport played, gender, and race were investigated in an attempt to explore a potential relationship with athletic career transition. A mixed method approach was employed.

Research Questions

1. What is the degree to which student-athletes with exhausted eligibility have incorporated an athletic identity into their persona?
2. What is the level of athlete transition loss of student-athletes with exhausted eligibility?
3. Are the levels of athletic identity for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility different based on demographic status?
4. Is there a relationship between degree of athletic identity and level of athletic transition loss in student-athletes with exhausted eligibility?
5. Does participation in career development programming aid student-athletes with exhausted eligibility in their athletic transition loss?
6. What is the overall effect of the transition from athlete to non-athlete for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility?
Null Hypotheses

$H_{01}$ There will not be a statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility.

$H_{02}$ There will not be a statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility.

$H_{03}$ There will not be a statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in revenue sports and the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in non-revenue sports.

$H_{04}$ There will not be a statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility.

$H_{05}$ There will not be a statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility.
Ho$_6$ There will not be a statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in revenue sports and the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in non-revenue sports.

Ho$_7$ Student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who have a higher athletic identification will not have a significantly higher score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who have lower athletic identification.

Ho$_8$ Student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participate in career development programming will not score significantly lower on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who do not participate in career development programming.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

**Athletic Identity**: The degree to which an individual identifies with the role of athlete (Brewer, et al., 1993).

**Athletic Career Transition**: The stage in which athletes have completed their intercollegiate athletic careers and do not intend on continuing their sport professionally or in the Olympics.
Career: The area of profession an individual chooses to train and prepare for in a permanent pursuit (Mish, 2005).

Career Development: The formation of mature and realistic career plans, which have been determined through the assessment of one’s career goals, interests, and abilities based on an awareness of vocational opportunities and requirements (Crites, 1978).

Elite Athlete: An individual who is currently competing or has previously competed at a college varsity, professional, or national or international level; one who exhibits a heightened self-awareness of his/her body and to some extent defines oneself in terms of his/her physique and physical performance (Barkhoff & Heiby, 2004).

Exhausted Eligibility: The student-athlete has participated in four years of intercollegiate athletics and, under the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) rules, can no longer participate on behalf of a school in a NCAA sponsored sport (NCAA, 2005).

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA): The governing body of American intercollegiate athletics with over 1,250 member institutions, conferences, and organizations (NCAA, 2005).

NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Program: NCAA education and outreach program designed for the total development of student-athletes. The program addresses five key areas of a student-athlete’s experience: athletics, academics, career development, community service, and personal growth (NCAA, 2005).

Student-Athlete/Division I Athlete: An individual who has received an athletic scholarship to participate in intercollegiate athletics at the highest level of intercollegiate
athletics or an athlete who has earned a varsity letter for his/her participation in intercollegiate athletics.

Significance of the Study

Students who participate in NCAA sanctioned sports can be faced with significant difficulties when their athletic career ends. The majority of student-athletes develop the social identity of athlete during the early part of their childhood and suddenly, upon the exhaustion of eligibility or when a major injury occurs, those individuals are no longer members of that social group. With only one percent of student-athletes continuing their athletic career post-graduation, it is essential that NCAA institutional members prepare their athletes for life after athletics. The preparation for life after athletics may be done through career development programming that focuses on helping the student-athletes to understand that many of the skills they have developed can be transferred to other areas in their lives. It may also be necessary to discuss opportunities for competition and continued athletic involvement following athletic career termination.

In an effort to expose all student-athletes to such educational programming, the NCAA has established the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program and requires that all member institutions participate (NCAA, 2005). While career development opportunities are one component of this program, many student-athletes do not utilize the resources offered in planning for life after college. Student-athletes lack of preparedness for life after sport has the potential to create a negative experience for the athletes as they begin to transition away from being an athlete. The lack of preparedness may lead to a stunted development
of career aspirations and the ability to develop relationships with individuals outside of athletics.

Additionally, one programming area that is typically not in place in athletic departments is one expressly designed to help the student-athlete make the transition from athlete to non-athlete. There is a significant change in the social network of a former athlete, and it may prove to be difficult for the athlete to develop a new social network and social identity. Former student-athletes who have not had a positive transition from athlete to non-athlete many experience withdrawal, uncertainty about the future, and an overriding question of where they belong in life. The goal of this research is to further understand the transition from athlete to non-athlete in intercollegiate student-athletes and provide suggestions for programming that will assist the former student-athletes in experiencing the transition successfully.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

As individuals proceed through daily experiences, they are categorized as a member of a given group based on appearance, behaviors, and social networks. Current literature on athletic career transition is reviewed to understand the experiences of elite athletes moving from the state of athlete to non-athlete. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework within which a student-athlete’s identity is developed.

Social identity theory is the primary theoretical base used in this study. The literature review will look at current research on the development of athletic identity as the main persona of an intercollegiate athlete. The transition student-athletes experience as their athletic career is terminated with the exhaustion of eligibility is explored. Additionally, Jeffrey Arnett’s emerging adult theory and Arthur Chickering’s identity development theory are reviewed, as both theories specifically address the identity development of college aged students. Nancy Schlossberg’s transition theory is explored as the theory looks specifically at adults in transition and has been applied to college student’s transition skill development. Finally, a history of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the current NCAA support program, the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program are explored to identify the practices that are currently in place to aid student-athletes in developing successful life skills.
Identity

Very early on in one’s life, identity is developed and the categories that one is tied to indicate how that individual is like and unlike other individuals. Identity is “an existential position, to an inner organization of needs, abilities, and self-perceptions as well as to a sociopolitical stance” (Marcia, 1980, p. 159). Identity can further be defined as “how an individual comes to define oneself and make meaning of that self” (Stewart, 2009, p. 253). An individual’s self-identity is developed through social interactions beginning with family and further developed through interactions throughout one’s life (Baron & Byrne, 1997). Self-identity influences how people process the social world based on the information that the people have about themselves such as abilities, emotions, and motives (Klein, Loftus, & Burton, 1989). The better developed an individual’s structure of identity, the more aware the individual will be with regard to similarities and differences to others and the less developed the structure, the less the individual will be aware of his/her distinctiveness from others (Marcia, 1980).

Erikson (1963) developed an eight stage model of psychosocial development outlining that identity development occurs during adolescence. Stage 5 of Erikson’s model is identity versus role confusion where the focus of the adolescent individual is to secure a stable identity (Erikson, 1963). Stage 5 is the time in individuals’ lives where they evaluate their past experiences to determine who they are. Erikson (1968) believed that college allowed individuals to move away from home and explore a sense of self as related to personal values, interests, goals, and surrounding world. While adolescence is a crucial time for identity development, Erikson believed that identity development
continues throughout adulthood with changes in identity occurring during each life cycle period (Erikson, 1959). Identity is not static and continues to develop through individuals’ lives as they experience new environments and are exposed to new people, activities, and values. This exploration allows individuals to understand their own uniqueness and how they fit into the community in which they live. The way in which individuals are categorized by others and how they fit into the community in which they live is their social identity.

**Social Identity Theory**

Very early in people’s lives, individuals begin to learn who they are. This understanding of one’s self can be looked at as being categorized by two divergent types of identity: personal identity and social identity (Baron & Byrne, 1997). Tajfel and Turner (1979) differentiated between the two types of identity, arguing that the difference lies between interpersonal situations and group situations. Personal identity is focused on interpersonal contexts and is a set of meanings linked to the self that carry across roles and situations (Stets & Burke, 2000). Personal identities consist of self-describers, such as personal details and biographic information, which are developed based on the interpersonal similarities and differences with other group members (Baron & Byrne, 1997). Social identity theory addresses group situations, intergroup relations, and group processing and is primarily developed through an individual’s membership with a group (Brown, 2000).

For each person, the social identity includes unique characteristics such as one’s name and self-concept as well as shared characteristics with others. The shared
characteristics are those characteristics that help to define a specific group. For example, a shared characteristic and behavior of an Anti-Semitic group is hatred toward individuals of the Jewish faith. If someone has a social identity that is tied to this group, that individual will share the attitudes and behaviors that are associated with the group. It is through a process of identification with a given group that social identity is formulated. The focus of social identity theory is on the structure and function of an individual’s identities as related to membership with different groups (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Some categories of social identity may include gender, vocation, political affiliation, ethnicity, or sport participation.

The foundation of social identity theory is that individuals use social groups and group membership to maintain and support their personal and group identities. Membership in a group and being seen as a member of a group helps to determine an individual’s cognitive and behavioral processes (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). As individuals use social categorization to determine the groups to which they belong and how they relate to group members, identity formation occurs on the basis of their ability to relate to group members (Brown, 2000). Based on how individuals evaluate the self-image that is affected by their social group and the image of that social group to others, they are able to develop a sense of who they are.

The emphasis of social identity theory is on inter-group relationships and group participation. Relationships and participation in groups and activities help to define who we are. The basic premise of social identity theory is that identity is formed based on group membership (Brown, 2000). Humans, by nature, are social beings and seek to find
a group or groups to which they can belong. The development of social identity is based on the emotional attachment and value that is placed on a specific group membership (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The ways in which an individual thinks, feels, and behaves are directly related to and prescribed by that individual’s group membership (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). The more salient an identity is in relation to other identities, the more likely that it will be used across contexts (Stryker, 1968; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). For example, a basketball player who has a highly salient identity of “jock” may bring the same attitudes, behaviors, and values into the classroom that he brings onto the basketball court. As an individual generates a stronger tie with a specific group, behaviors and values for that individual are likely to become more in-line with those of the group identity.

Participation in leisure activities, such as sport, while important to forming a social identity, also contributes to self-assessment and an understanding of who one is. Organized activities provide the opportunity for adolescents to look at themselves and gain an understanding of “who they are” (Hensen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). While engaging in an activity and gaining an understanding of “whom” one is, participants are able to express and refine their identity. The extent to which individuals engage in activities depends on the degree to which they believe they have the characteristics of other people associated with said activity. If an individual places a high value on being an athlete or being seen by others as a “jock,” it is more likely that individual will engage in athletic activities than an individual who does not value the characteristics of an athlete.
Athletic Identity

The extent to which student-athletes relate to their athletic identity may play a role in their behaviors, attitudes, and ultimately their transition from athlete to non-athlete. Athletic identity can be defined as the extent to which a person identifies with the athlete role (Brewer, et al., 1993). Over time, the athletic identity is proven to strengthen and the strength of athletic identification may be even stronger should the team on which the athlete plays be successful (Grove, Fish, & Eklund, 2003). Additionally, for athletes who excel, such as those selected for All-Star teams, athletic identification increased (Grove, et al., 2003), demonstrating that when athletes receive college scholarship for their athletic ability, athletic identity increased.

An increase in the strength of athletic identification may, in part, allow the athlete to project a positive image following success while protecting a negative image following defeat (Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, & Skelton, 1981). Wann, Dolan, McGeorge, and Allison (1994) found a strong relationship between fan identification with a team and emotional responses to watching the team perform, and the strength of identification found in fans is likely to be present in the sport participants themselves. Petitpas, Champagne, Chartrand, Danish, and Murphy (1997) found that while sport can provide many opportunities for the student-athlete to learn about themselves and their teammates, the commitment can dominate the student-athletes’ life, not allowing for participation in other activities. If one social self has predominance over the others, it may lead to identity foreclosure and a premature commitment to a specific lifestyle (Miller, 2009). Identity foreclosure refers to when a person makes a commitment based on another
individual’s choices, usually parental, rather than self-chosen (Marcia, 1980). Some college athletes may be at a high risk for identity foreclosure due to the fact that one social identity (that of athlete) has excessive predominance over the other identities (Adler & Adler, 1989, Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996, Sparkes, 1998). This strong identification as an athlete may lead to emotional difficulties upon athletic career retirement as other social identities have not had the opportunity to develop.

Due to the time consumed by participation in collegiate athletics, intercollegiate athletics, and activities associated with athletics, is often the exclusive commitment for student-athletes. The time commitment of athletics can be compared to career-type employment or an intense involvement in an association such as a charitable or church organization. Student-athletes’ investments in other social roles (e.g., student, friend, fraternity member) are often reduced, leading to an increased athletic identification (McPherson, 1980) as college student-athletes often compromise their academics, family, and social life in an effort to give everything they have to attain peak performance in their sport. Pearson & Petitpas (1990) found that student-athletes were less likely to explore other career or educational options because of this intense involvement in, and commitment to, athletics, thus magnifying the likelihood of developing a foreclosed identity. With a strong athletic identification, student-athletes may find it difficult to transition to a period in which athletics is no longer their primary identity and role.

Athletes begin to base their self-worth on their athletic performance early in life. Friends, family, and community members begin to know the individual as “the athlete”, and this social identity begins to take center stage. When an athlete encounters a loss in
the form of competitive failure, injury, or sports career termination, individuals who identified most strongly with the athlete role will experience greater difficulties in adjustment that those who identified less with the athlete role (Brewer, 1993; Lavallee, Gordon, & Grove, 1997).

Student-athletes face pressures on campus that deal with the negative stereotypes that faculty and peers hold such as thinking of all athletes as “dumb jocks”. Sailes (1996) found that White and male students believed that student-athletes were not as smart as traditional students and that student-athletes take easy courses in an effort to maintain their eligibility. Research suggests that when student-athletes perceive a negative academic stereotype about their group (athlete), they will perform more poorly academically than student-athletes in a non-stereotypical environment (Sailes). However, Settles, Sellers, and Damas (2002) have indicated that female student-athletes perform better academically than male student-athletes and female student-athletes tend to take more ownership in their academic plan than their male counterparts (Bedker-Meyer, 1990). One possible reason that female student-athletes outperform male student-athletes academically may be that there are more professional opportunities for male student-athletes to continue playing their sport then there are for female student-athletes (Coakley, 1994). Due to the lack of professional opportunities in sport, female student-athletes may place less of an emphasis on athletic identity and spend more time on developing vocational goals for opportunities outside of athletics (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004). When an individual has two social identities, such as athlete and student, the identities may be conflicting stereotypes and thus they are in constant competition.
(Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). This may enhance the role identification more in all student-athletes, which, in turn, could cause increased difficulty in the transition from athlete to non-athlete.

The identification of student-athletes as athletes by peers may be due to the exposure that the student-athletes receive from the media. As members of an intercollegiate athletic team, student-athletes are performers with the audience being the media. Student-athletes are publicly praised and criticized by the media and by people whom they have never met, which in turn influences the student-athletes’ self-worth (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkney, 2002). Due to this exposure, male student-athletes are often treated as celebrities on campus and in the classroom (Burstyn 2002; Coakley, 2007) causing a positive affirmation for their athletic identity. Additionally, African American student-athletes may be further identified by the community as an athlete, especially when on a predominantly White campus. On a predominantly White campus, one out of nine African American students are athletes on athletic scholarships as compared to one out of 50 White students on athletic scholarship (Harrison & Lawrence, 2003). Therefore, there may be a difference in the degree to which White and African American student-athletes have incorporated athletic identity into their persona.

Exhausted Athletic Eligibility

The end of the college career is a catalyst for the beginning of most students’ professional work careers or graduate study. For the majority of student-athletes, this marks the end of their formal, competitive athletic career. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) found that the transition from athlete to non-athlete was the most challenging change for
the majority of college athletes. With only 1.6% of college athletes continuing their
erthletic careers into the professional arena (Edwards, 2000; Lapchick, 2001), the end of
college marked the end of competitive athletics for most student-athletes. While the
number of college student-athletes who continue their playing career in the professional
ranks is very small, many athletes still dream of playing at the next level and, as a result,
are not adequately prepared for life following athletics. Bann (1985) found that student-
athletes who participate in highly competitive athletic programs were less able to develop
educational and career plans than their non-athlete peers. Highly competitive programs
would include those in the majority of Division I institutions, where the student-athletes
are earning scholarships to participate in their sports. Because so few student-athletes are
preparing for life following collegiate athletics and so few actually are successful in
becoming a professional athlete, it seems essential that career development programs be
in place to assist the student-athletes in their transition.

With athletic identity serving as the main social identity for the majority of
Division I student-athletes and only 45% of elite athletes engaged in pre-retirement
planning (Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2004), it is essential that student-athletes plan
for their athletic career retirement. Career planning seminars may prove useful for this
group in their ability to plan for the day that athletics are over. Research on social identity
theory has only examined the in-group member deciding to terminate group membership
in an attempt to achieve improved self-image. Social identity theory has not looked at
what happens to individuals as they are forced out of membership, as with 98% of college
student-athletes following graduation or an athletic career-ending injury.
Upon athletic career retirement, it is likely that student-athletes will experience psychological and behavioral crises due to intense involvement in intercollegiate athletics. When an individual’s social context changes, as it does at the conclusion of an athletic career, a strain is placed on that individual’s identity that requires coping skills (Baron & Byrne, 1997). To resolve these crises, it is common for student-athletes to withdraw from student and social roles (Adler & Adler, 1991). Because of their intense participation in intercollegiate athletics, student-athletes may not participate in exploration of alternative career options and potential interests. Lally and Kerr (2005) indicated that student-athletes have delayed career maturation and that while in the beginning of their college career they focused primarily on professional athletics, by junior and senior year, they reported career plans. Yet, while Lally and Kerr found career planning to have occurred, it was delayed and student-athletes may not have taken the steps (i.e. jobs, internships, or co-ops) to fully prepare for their chosen career.

Erpic, Wylleman, and Zupancic (2004) found that difficulty in sports career termination depended on whether the termination was voluntary or forced, a subjective evaluation of athletic achievements, the strength of athletic identity, and pre-retirement planning. Failure to formulate adequate career plans following a sports career may play a role in the difficulties that athletes face upon retirement (Good et al., 1993) and the failure to prepare may be magnified for African American student-athletes, especially those student-athletes who participate in highly visible sports such as football and basketball (Harrison & Lawrence, 2003). Providing opportunities for student-athletes to
explore career direction and opportunities may allow the athletes to devise a plan for making the transition from athlete to non-athlete.

The question of, “What am I going to do with my life?” is a question that few student-athletes have asked themselves. Researchers have found evidence of poor career planning on the part of student-athletes (Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Murphy et al., 1996; Smallman & Sowa, 1996). Student-athletes, in comparison to their non-athlete peers, participated in fewer career development programs and typically did not spend as much time thinking about their career direction (Smallman & Sowa, 1996). Lally and Kerr (2005) found that student-athletes have less defined career plans upon their arrival on campus in comparison to their non-athlete peers. Because of the athletic identification, student-athletes do not expend the time necessary for a successful career development process. While career development may aid in the transition from athlete to non-athlete, the majority of student-athletes were not receiving those services due to barriers such as time commitments and their athletic identity (Martens & Lee, 1998). If student-athletes are finding the transition from athlete to non-athlete difficult, the availability of career development services to assist the student-athlete in making career decisions and plans seems imperative.

The public examination that the student-athlete is thrust into simply through participation is likely to further increase the athletic identification. Cornelius (1995) found that the college years are key developmental years for individuals, including the development of independence and a firm identity, as well as planning for the future. However, student-athletes who identify strongly with the role of athlete may be less
likely to explore career opportunities due to athletic commitments, thus not preparing for their future (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000). Student-athletes may not have developed in other areas of independence, which will reduce the number of their social identities, nor may they have any plans for the future, all of which make the transition from athlete to non-athlete more difficult. The college years are formative in the exploration of self, identity, and vocational goals but student-athletes may not have the opportunity to engage in self-exploration during this time due to the time commitments of athletics and not having the additional time needed to participate in activities outside of athletics.

Demographic Differences in Identity and Transition

Differences have been found in the level of athletic identification based on gender, race, and participation in high profile sports. The lack of investments in roles outside of athletics may cause a greater degree of athletic identity (McPherson, 1980) and this may be especially true for male student-athletes who participate in revenue sports. Adler and Adler (1991) found that male basketball players failed to invest in the role of student due to the serious investment in athletics and their athletic selves. Further, negative stereotypic beliefs regarding student-athletes’ intelligence, particularly about Black males, can lead the student-athletes to lower their academic expectations (Stone et al., 1999), thus further strengthening athletic identity. Minority student-athletes receive a higher proportion of the athletic scholarships available, as compared to White student-athletes (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986) and it may be that student-athletes on scholarship have a greater level of athletic identity. Additionally, Black student-athletes perform
lower academically and are less likely to graduate from college than White student-athletes (Anderson & South, 2000), which may be due to the fact that Black student-athletes place a greater emphasis on sports than on academics (Benson, 2000). The greater emphasis that is placed on athletics for male student-athletes and for Black student-athletes, creates a greater athletic identity and the identification with the athletic role may make the transition from athlete to non-athlete more difficult for this group.

In addition to the racial differences that have been found in the level of athletic identification, researchers have also found differences between gender, race, and the type of sport played and the ability to successfully develop career goals and transition out of athletics. A failure to formulate adequate career plans following a sports career may play a role in the difficulties that athletes face upon retirement (Good et al., 1993) Male student-athletes, especially male athletes who participate in high profile sports, scored significantly lower on the Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) than a non-athlete comparison group matched by gender (Kennedy & Dimick, 1987).

Additionally, Smallman and Sowa (1996) found that male student-athletes who participate in both revenue and non-revenue sports scored in the bottom 25th percentile of norms on the Career Development Inventory (CDI), a measurement of career maturity and development. Differences between race and the type of sport played have also been found in the development of clear career goals. African American student-athletes, especially those student-athletes who participate in highly visible sports such as football and basketball failed to develop adequate career and vocational goals (Harrison & Lawrence, 2003). If student-athletes, especially male and Black student-athletes and
those student-athletes participating in revenue sports are not developing clear and adequate vocational goals, it is likely that these groups of student-athletes will have difficulty in making the transition from athlete to non-athlete.

**Emerging Adulthood**

Late adolescence and the college years are formative in the development of identity and worldviews for many individuals. Arnett’s theory of emerging adulthood is a developmental phase between adolescence and young adulthood (Arnett, 2006). The theory focuses on individuals ages 18-25 and looks at this distinct period demographically, subjectively, and for identity exploration (Arnett, 2004).

Emerging adulthood is a theory that was developed as industrial societies began to change and shift toward allowing for an extended period of independent exploration (Arnett, 2000). Prior to this cultural shift, individuals in their early 20’s were typically married and had their first child, engaging in many of the adult responsibilities that are now started later in life (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adulthood is, in essence, a developmental stage, for industrialized cultures, that precedes young adulthood where the individual does not feel like an adolescent or an adult (Tanner, 2006). As the median age of marriage and the birth of first child rose steadily from the 1960’s to the mid-1990’s, people between the ages of 18 and 25 developed a greater sense of exploration, including identity exploration (Arnett, 2006). One of the reasons that the median age for marriage and having a first child has risen is an increased participation in higher education (Arnett, 2000). Individuals are now focused on earning a higher degree and then finding an occupation, which delays the start of a family (Arnett, 2005).
Emerging adulthood is posited to be an age of identity development, instability, self-focus, and the age of feeling in-between (Arnett, 2006). Unlike previous theorists, Arnett proposed that an individual’s identity in the areas of love, work, and worldviews are developed during emerging adulthood as opposed to adolescence, which was traditionally the time child development researchers considered these parts of the identity to evolve (Arnett, 2000). During adolescence, individuals often date in groups with recreation being the focus of the dating but with the independence associated with emerging adulthood; individuals are more focused on exploring the potential for physical and emotional intimacy (Arnett, 2000).

Work also becomes an area for identity development in emerging adults as people, through self-exploration of interests and abilities, ask themselves what kind of occupation they would like to have for the long term (Arnett, 2005). For student-athletes, participating in athletics becomes “work” as many student-athletes earn a college scholarship for their participation in their given sport. As non-athletes work part-time jobs to help pay for their college education, student-athletes “work” for their athletic based scholarships to help pay for college, however; while non-athletes may be employed in a variety of different areas, student-athletes’ “work” remains constant in that the student-athletes only experience the one sport in which they participate. Emerging adults are also developing their worldview during this time as they enter the college experience with a set of ideals learned during childhood and through the exposure to a variety of people and views, begin to shift to develop their own committed worldviews (Arnett, 2000).
Emerging adulthood is a time of instability in the lives of the individuals in this stage of life and this population has the highest rate of residential change, indicating the profound changes that emerging adult are experiencing (Arnett, 2006, 2000). Some emerging adults remain at home with their parents, others live in college dorms, and others live independently. Like non-athlete college students, student-athletes have instability in residential status. Student-athletes may live on or off campus and typically move either dorm rooms or apartments yearly. Emerging adults have a high degree of demographic instability and during this constant demographic change, emerging adults have the freedom of exploration.

Emerging adulthood is a time of life that tends to be self-focused due to the lack of commitment to others and social obligations (Arnett, 2006). Up to this point in life, individuals have had to abide by the rules of their parents at home and the rules of the classroom at school and in the future, many will have family and work obligations (Arnett, 2006). During emerging adulthood, most people have the freedom to make decisions for their life independently of others (Arnett, 1998). Emerging adults recognize that this is a time in their life when they do not have to answer to anyone other than themselves; they also understand that the goal of this period is to become self-sufficient as that is what they see as becoming an adult (Arnett, 1998, 2004). Student-athletes may not have the opportunity to build autonomy during this period in life as coaches take on the “parenting” role. Teams have specific rules that must be abided by or punishments such as extra conditioning, study hall, and/or missing competitions, may ensue. Student-athletes are expected to abide by the rules of the team (rules most often determined by the
coaching staff), and this situation may stunt the maturation toward adulthood for student-athletes because they do not have the same freedoms as their peers.

Emerging adults do not see themselves as adolescents nor do they see themselves entirely as adults (Arnett, 2000, 2006). When researchers asked individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 if they felt as if they have reached adulthood, 60% responded that “in some ways yes, in some ways no” (Arnett, 2006, p. 11). One reason for the ambiguous answer to this question was the criteria for which most emerging adults base reaching adulthood upon, accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2006).

Becoming an adult is not based on the transitional milestones such as earning a degree or getting married but rather on responsibility and stability (Arnett, 2000). Arnett (2006) further stated that many emerging adults begin to feel like an adult at 18 or 19 but do not completely feel like an adult until their mid - to late - 20’s because they are not yet confident in accepting responsibility, making decisions, or having financial independence. Student-athletes on scholarship rely on their athletic scholarships for financial assistance for tuition, books, room, and board and often do not have the opportunity to take on part-time jobs in addition to academics and athletics. Additionally, as their non-athlete peers, student-athletes rely on parents, coaches, and mentors to assist in making decisions, not taking full responsibility for their actions. Additionally, student-athletes may be controlled, to a degree, by the coaches they have the ability to determine the amount of athletic scholarships student-athletes receive and alter the financial state of the student-athletes.
As student-athletes are typically between the ages of 18 and 24, falling within the traditional college student age range, they are in the developmental stage of emerging adult. Student-athletes on scholarship, especially those on a full athletic scholarship, have not yet found financial independence as their tuition, room, and board are paid for with the scholarship. Like most college students, student-athletes are not yet autonomous in making decisions and often rely on parents or coaches for support. However, because of the athletic demands on the student-athletes, investments in other social roles were often reduced (McPherson, 1980) and this lack of exploration with different social groups may not allow for the student-athletes to move through the emerging adulthood stage. Pearson & Petitpas (1990) have found that student-athletes were less likely to explore other career or educational options because of this intense involvement in, and commitment to, athletics, which does not allow for the work of identity development.

Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development

The college years are formative in the development of identity and the transition from adolescence to adulthood. This transition is no different for a non-athlete than for an athlete, but the student-athlete is also trying to find a balance between rigorous academic standards and rigorous athletic responsibilities. Chickering (1969) provided an overview of developmental issues as well as environmental conditions that college students experience. Specifically, Chickering’s theory takes into account interpersonal, emotional, ethical, and intellectual aspects of development. Chickering believed that the years in which an individual is a college student may “be the last opportunity for major change before the stability generated by more fixed social, interpersonal, and occupational roles
and responsibilities” (1969, p. 2). The changes that are associated with this time of an individual’s life were changes in interests, values and beliefs, intellect, career aspirations, and basic attitudes (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Further, the changes that were associated with the college experience and activities were influenced by the knowledge that is obtained during this time, an increase in competence, association with a diverse group of people, and the formation of new relationships (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002).

Within his theory, Chickering presented seven vectors of psychological development during the college years: a) developing competence, b) managing emotions, c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, d) establishing identity, e) developing mature interpersonal relationships, f) developing purpose, and g) developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, Forney, & Gudio-DiBrito, 1998). Developing competence refers to the development of intellectual, physical and manual, and social and interpersonal competences and having the confidence in the competences that have been developed (Chickering, 1969). Managing emotions is developed through an increase in awareness and an integration of emotions with behaviors and decisions (Chickering & Reisser). As individuals experience their responses to a given emotion, they reflect on how that behavior was perceived by others and make adjustments where needed in the future. Chickering defined becoming autonomous as becoming emotionally independent without the need for reassurance and approval from others. This process begins with disengaging from one’s parents and develops with the college student’s ability to cope with problems without asking for help (Chickering, 1969). The
establishment of one’s identity stems from the development of competence, emotion
management, and autonomy and “involves the clarification of conceptions concerning
physical needs, characteristics, and personal appearance, and clarification of sexual
identification” (Chickering, p. 14). As one’s identity is further developed, interpersonal
relationships are forged with a greater sense of trust and independence and the
relationships have the ability to withstand disagreement and separations (Chickering).
The development of purpose is generated through the integration of career goals, leisure
activities, and lifestyle into a plan that has meaning and purpose (Chickering & Reisser,
1993). Developing integrity is closely linked to the development of identity and purpose
and is a basic guide to one’s behaviors (Chickering).

In addition to the seven vectors of psychological development, Chickering (1969)
stated that environmental factors influence college student’s identity development and,
colleges and universities can only be effective if they reach the students where they live
and connect to the concerns of the students. Chickering and Reisser (1993) identified six
conditions that make a difference in student development: a) clarity of institutional
objectives, b) institutional size, c) curriculum and teaching, d) residence halls, e) faculty
and administration, and f) social network and student culture. The clarification of
institutional objectives is of importance because a distinctive environment of shared
values is developed for administration, faculty, students, and parents (Chickering, 1969).
This impacts identity development as the values of the institution are incorporated into
the personal value systems of the students.
Institutional size affects students’ development as the students need to have the opportunity to become involved in different activities in order to have the opportunity to develop competence, identity, integrity, and interpersonal relationships (Chickering, 1969). Students who attend smaller schools have more opportunity to become involved in activities as they cannot get lost in the shuffle as those at larger schools, however there may be less variety of opportunities (Chickering). Larger schools need to create a culture where there are facets wherein students do not have the opportunity to hide in the shadows.

Curriculum and teaching affect the development of intellectual competence, interpersonal relationship formation, and the development of a purpose (Chickering, 1969). A positive curriculum and effective teaching develops a student’s competency, autonomy, and identity. Residence halls are an important environmental factor when they produce a subculture for the college student in which shared values and rules of conduct are established and allow for the development of interpersonal relationships, integrity, and the management of emotions (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). As students are developing autonomy and moving from beneath the wings of their parents, willing faculty and administration become a sought after source for students to develop a relationship of mutual respect and, through adult conversations with faculty, can help clarify the student’s value system (Chickering). Student culture is an important environmental condition in helping to develop identity, values, and interpersonal relationships and help the student learn to manage their emotions (Chickering).
As do their collegiate classmates, student-athletes face the challenges of making decisions about careers, establishing their identity, modifying personal values, forming effective relationships, and developing self-esteem (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinkey, 1996). Parham (1993) identified six challenges that confronted college student-athletes during their collegiate careers: a) balancing athletics and academics, b) balancing social activities with the isolation of athletics, c) balancing athletic success with athletic failure, d) balancing physical health and injuries with an internal need of continuing to play, e) balancing the demands of relationships, including, parents, friends, family, and coaches, and f) dealing with the termination of a collegiate athletic career. Through their involvement in coursework and intercollegiate athletics, student-athletes continued to develop intellectual and physical competence. The establishment of an athletic identity, however, is directly related to involvement in athletics.

The establishment of an athletic identity may, in turn, have a direct effect on the student-athlete’s ability to establish clear vocational goals. Student-athletes scored significantly lower than non-athletes in a measure of career development tasks (Kennedy and Dimick, 1987). Chickering (1969) believed that the development of strong vocational purpose requires self-assessment and self-awareness. This self-assessment must involve an evaluation of needs, values, interests, and abilities through identity development (Lally & Kerr, 2005). Because student-athletes are so focused on their athletic identity, they fail to develop their additional roles. Adler and Adler (1991) observed that male basketball players invested so heavily in their athletic selves that they did not seriously invest in the other available roles. This occurrence did not allow for the formation of clear vocational
goals outside of athletics. When the student-athlete begins to transition from athlete to non-athlete, many have not developed a purpose for their future, other than in the athletics arena.

**Schlossberg’s Transition Theory**

Nancy Schlossberg’s (1981) transition theory looks at the impact that a given transition has at a given period in time, based on the individual and the environment in which the transition occurred (Evans, Forney, and Gudio-DiBrito, 1998) and was developed as a theory to aid adults through the transition process (Schlossberg, 1981). Schlossberg’s transition theory provides insight into factors related to the transition, the individual, and the environment that will likely determine the impact of the transition on the individual. Schlossberg (1981) stated that a transition can be both an event and nonevent that results in some type of change and can only be defined by the individual experiencing the transition. Each individual is unique and it is essential that the individual’s appraisal of the transition is taken into consideration as if you have two individuals experiencing the same event, one may view it as a non-event while the other individual experiencing the same event seeing it as a transition.

There are three classifications of transitions: a) anticipated, b) unanticipated, and c) nonevents (Schlossberg, 1984). Anticipated transitions are those that the individual expects to occur such as a high school graduation or NCAA exhausted eligibility. Unanticipated transitions are those that an individual does not expect to occur such as a career ending athletic injury. Nonevents are events that are expected to occur but do not and can be broken into four categories: personal (related to aspirations), ripple (felt due to
nonevents of someone else), resultant (caused by an event), and delayed (anticipated event that may still occur) (Schlossberg, 1984). Nonevents are described as possible more so than probable and an example could be a student-athlete being drafted to a professional team.

Through time, the individual moves through a process that begins with a preoccupation with the transition to integration of the transition. There are three phases within a transition: a) moving-in, b) moving-through, and c) moving-out. During the moving-in phase, the individual is focused on becoming familiar with the norms and expectations of the transition they are beginning to experience (Schlossberg, 1984). During the moving-through phase, individuals are trying to survive the transition (Schlossberg, 1984). During the moving-out phase, the individual experiencing the transition may experience a sense of grief (Schlossberg, 1984). According to Schlossberg, the ability for an individual to cope with a transition is directly related to four sets of factors: a) situation, b) self, c) support, and d) strategies (Schlossberg, 1984). Within the theory, there is a stress on the role of perceptions in transitions because if a transition is not defined as such by the individual experiencing it, it does not exist as a transition. To understand the transition for each person, it is essential to understand the type, context, and impact of the transition.

During the transitional process, individuals moved from a preoccupation with the transition to an integration of the transition, and the transition may lead to growth of the individual or to a decline (Schlossberg, 1981). There are four major factors that influence the ability for an individual to cope with the transition, which are referred to as the “4
S’s”: a) situation, b) self, c) support, and d) strategies (Schlossberg, 1984). Situation refers to the trigger of the transition, did it occur at a good time or at a bad time, does the individual perceive they are in control of the situation, and is the transition permanent or temporary. There are two classifications of self: a) personal and demographic characteristics and b) psychological resources (Schlossberg, 1984). The personal and demographic characteristics affect how the individual views life and may include socioeconomic status, gender, age, stage in life, ethnicity, and state of health. Psychological resources such as a positive outlook on self and a strong set of values aid in the individual’s ability to cope (Schlossberg, 1984). Support can be measured by identifying the individual’s stable supports; the more social support individuals receive, the more likely they are successful in coping with the transition (Schlossberg, 1981). Finally, the strategies that individuals use in making the transition influences their ability to cope. The categories of strategies are: a) modifying the situation, b) controlling the meaning, and c) managing the stress of the transition (Schlossberg, 1981).

Schlossberg’s model can be directly related to a student-athletes ability to cope with the transition from athlete to non-athlete. Additionally, the coping mechanism that the student-athlete is using may create the ability to move on during this transition and focus on the future rather than what has been. While the transition that the student-athlete faces is often expected (completion of athletic eligibility), the student-athletes athletic identity may not allow them to face the possibility of a life following athletics. Lavalle, Gordon, and Grove (1997) found that the retirement from elite sports marked a distressful transition for athletes because social and physical domains must be reevaluated.
Additionally, the transition from athlete to non-athlete affected the individual’s well-being due to the individual’s perceptions of self and abilities (Kim & Moen, 2001). The sport in which the individual participated in often defined who the person was and satisfaction with life was directly related to athletic performance.

The transition that the student-athlete faces upon the completion of the athletic career results in changed relationships, routines, and roles. As an athlete, there is a built-in support system in the team. Coaches and academic advisors provide a schedule for the daily routine, and the athletes are often identified by their peers and themselves solely as an athlete. Based on Schlossberg’s transition theory, the move from athlete to non-athlete classifies as a life transition. The transition from participation in sport to not participating in sport lasts between six months to one year (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993), indicating that the transition process can likely create different reactions throughout the process. If the student-athlete has developed a primary identity of athlete and that identity is not longer relevant, the transition to find a new identity following college may prove difficult. The transition from athlete to non-athlete takes away this self-appraisal system that has been in place in the majority of collegiate athletes since grade school. A holistic approach to student development may aid in the transition to allow the student-athlete to understand that there are available identities other than the athletic role.

History of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Program

The institutions of football and higher education created the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1905 when universities were discontinuing athletics due
to numerous injuries and, in some cases, deaths (NCAA, 2005). The pads that the athletes wore at the time did not protect their bodies, and the practices of “reckless abandon” resulted in 18 deaths and 149 serious injuries in 1905 alone. Theodore Roosevelt, the President of the United States at the time, encouraged university leaders from around the country to meet collectively to develop reforms. Following the meeting, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) was officially formed in 1906 with 62 member institutions. In 1910, the NCAA took its current name and by 1919, included 170 institutions and sponsored 11 sports (NCAA, 2005). In 1921, the first NCAA championship was held in track and field and over time, more rules were developed to further govern college athletics.

Following World War II, the “Sanity Code” was established to provide guidelines for recruiting potential student-athletes and for the monitoring of financial aid (NCAA, 2005). These guidelines were established to prevent institutions from abusing student-athletes who were participating in athletics. However, with a failure to end the abuse and a growth in membership, the need for full-time leadership was realized. In 1951, Walter Byers was named the first Executive Director of the NCAA. Under Byers leadership, a national headquarters was built in 1952 in Kansas City and was later moved to its current headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. In 1973, the NCAA was split into three Divisions (I, II, III) based on size and mission of the institutional members. Previously, only male sports were governed, but in 1980, the NCAA included women’s athletics programs, services, and representation within their governance (NCAA). The NCAA today governs
a total of 1,274 member institutions including Division I, Division II, and Division III members.

The NCAA is a governing body for intercollegiate athletics that attempts to monitor the athletic, academic, and financial aid of participating athletes. The mission of the NCAA is to “govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable, and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount” (NCAA, 2005, paragraph 2). The educational experience of an intercollegiate athlete occurs in the classroom, on the athletic playing surface, and in social realms of the general college experience. College students, including student-athletes, are in a developmental stage of their lives that is a formative time for the development of identity. The experiences intercollegiate athletes are having through their participation in sport will help to shape who they are for the remainder of their lives.

To provide an environment where student-athletes have the opportunity to develop a well-rounded college experience, the NCAA implemented the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program in 1993 focusing on five commitments for student-athlete personal growth: a) academic excellence, b) athletics excellence, c) personal development, d) community service, and e) career development. The University in this study was a pilot school for the CHAMPS/Life Skills program in 1993 and currently remains committed to providing a CHAMPS/Life Skills program for the student-athletes. All NCAA member universities are now required to participate in this program in an effort to provide the best educational services and support to their student-athletes. The program attempts to
enhance the “quality of the student-athlete experience within the university setting” (NCAA, 2005, paragraph 5).

The main component of this model that directly affects the transition of a student-athlete to non-athlete is the career development aspect. The career development component of the CHAMPS/Life Skills program is to “encourage the student-athlete to develop and pursue career and life goals” (NCAA 2005, paragraph 9). With the athletic identification of the majority of student-athletes so strong, it is likely they are going to have difficulty in making the transition from collegiate athlete to non-athlete. The identification of the social role of athlete has been the central identity for many athletes, and they are often under-prepared for life after athletics. The career development programming that is offered to student-athletes can assist them in thinking about viable options and realizing that while their social identity has been as an athlete for the majority of their life, there are additional groups with whom they have, or could have, membership. Yet if the majority of student-athletes are not participating in the career development programming (Bann, 1985, Good et al., 1993, Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2004), the programming that has been established cannot be effective in aiding in the transition from athlete to non-athlete.

Summary

The scarcity of research regarding programming for transitioning student-athletes, especially those concluding a collegiate athletic career is disconcerting. As addressed by Arnett’s emerging adulthood theory and Chickering’s identity development theory, in
current society, the college years are those in which identity formation occurs. With intense participation in athletics, the social identity that is most often reinforced for intercollegiate student-athletes is that of an athlete. Schlossberg’s transition theory demonstrates the importance of first understanding if a given event is defined by the individual as a transition and second the importance of a strong support system once a transition has been identified as such. Student-athletes will experience a transition as they move from an athlete to a non-athlete and the question of whether the student-athletes have the necessary support system in place to successfully move-through the transition needs to be asked. Further, the student-athletes focus has been on athletics and school thus the preparation for a professional work career may have been delayed as the student-athletes often do not have the opportunity to participate in part-time jobs or internships to gain related experience. Without the support system or the preparation for the conclusion of an athletic career, student-athletes may find difficulty in making the transition from athlete to non-athlete.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which intercollegiate student-athletes have developed an athletic identity. Additionally, the study investigated whether participation in career development programming assisted student-athletes in their athletic career transition upon exhaustion of their NCAA athletic eligibility. Based on previous research, factors such as sport played, gender, and race were also investigated in an attempt to explore potential relationships with the athletic career transition. This chapter will outline the sample and population as well as the methods for data collection and analysis. The investigation tested the following null hypotheses:

\( \text{Ho}_1 \) There will not be a statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility.

\( \text{Ho}_2 \) There will not be a statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility.

\( \text{Ho}_3 \) There will not be a statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who
participated in revenue sports and the level of athletic identification for
student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in non-revenue
sports.

$H_0_4$ There will not be a statistically significant difference between the degree
of athletic transition for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility
and the degree of athletic transition for female student-athletes with
exhausted eligibility.

$H_0_5$ There will not be a statistically significant difference between the degree
of athletic transition for student-athletes of other races with exhausted
eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for White student-athletes
with exhausted eligibility.

$H_0_6$ There will not be a statistically significant difference between the degree
of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who
participated in revenue sports and the degree of athletic transition for
student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in non-revenue
sports.

$H_0_7$ Student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who have a higher athletic
identification will not have a significantly higher score on the Exhausted
Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility
who have lower athletic identification.

$H_0_8$ Student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participate in career
development programming will not score significantly lower on the
Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who do not participate in career development programming.

**Setting**

The study was conducted at a mid-sized public, land grant university in the southeast United States.

**Population and Sample**

The population that was studied for this research project was student-athletes with exhausted eligibility from a mid-sized public, land-grant university. The estimated number of student-athletes in the population was 80, so a participant pool of 80 was the desired number of participants; the potential participants ranged in age from 21 to 25. All invited participants had exhausted their athletic eligibility at the time of the study, in accordance with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) rules and regulations. All 19 varsity sports at the University were represented in the study. The sports included Division I revenue sports (football, men’s and women’s basketball, and baseball) as well as those designated as non-revenue (men’s and women’s soccer, golf, men’s and women’s tennis, women’s volleyball, men’s and women’s track and field, men’s and women’s swimming and diving, and women’s rowing).

The pool of participants for this study was generated from the individuals who had participated in intercollegiate athletics for the university’s athletic department. Upon informed consent, all student-athletes who exhausted their eligibility within the spring sporting season of 2007 and the fall and winter 2007-2008 seasons were invited to
participate in this study. At the top of the demographic questionnaire, a brief statement about the purpose of the study, how the gathered data would be used, and how confidentiality would be maintained served as the informed consent for this research project. Interviewees were selected by proportional stratified sampling, which allowed for a determination if differences exist between the subgroups while decreasing the probable sampling error. The proportional stratified sampling also ensured that the appropriate number of interviewees was drawn from homogeneous subsets of the population. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted prior to the distribution of the web-based surveys.

Data Collection

Data were collected through the use of web-based surveys that were developed to gain an understanding of the degree to which the athletic identity is incorporated into the student-athlete’s persona and the amount of athletic transition loss the student-athlete has experienced. At the conclusion of the selected student-athletes collegiate athletic career, they were given three survey instruments three months following the completion of the specified official season. The three instruments included were a) Demographic Survey, b) Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), and c) Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale. A link to the web-based surveys was sent to the student-athletes with exhausted eligibility via email a month following the conclusion of the completion of their final season. The invited participants were sent the link to the survey a month following the conclusion of the completion of their final season so that the student-athletes had the opportunity to experience the transition from athlete to non-athlete for a period of time
before being asked for their feelings about the transition. The researcher felt as though a
month would allow the student-athletes to move on from the initial feelings associated
with the conclusion of their sports career. Follow-up emails were then sent once a month
for three months following the initial email requesting participation if they had not
already completed the online surveys. The entire pool of participants was sent the follow-
up emails due to the anonimity of the survey.

An informed consent form was included in the material stating the purpose of the study and additional qualifying information. The informed consent form was included at the top of a brief survey asking the participants the sport they participated in and demographic information such as age, major, race, and gender. Additionally, the participants were asked how many career development programs they participated in while in college. The researcher collected the completed surveys and analyzed the data.

In addition to the survey instruments, data collection also included a focused interview for a proportional stratified sample of the survey participants. The interviews took place following the completion of the survey instruments and the number of participants in the interview portion of the study was influenced by the data and the point at which saturation had been reached.

**Instruments**

*Demographic Information Survey.* This instrument was designed to obtain characteristics about the participants such as age, race, gender, and sport participation. The question regarding plans for sport participation, post-collegiate, was asked to determine eligibility to participate in this study (Appendix A).
*Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS).* The AIMS (Appendix B) is an instrument that measures the degree to which an individual relates to his/her role as an athlete (Brewer et al., 1993). The inventory measures the strength and the exclusivity of athletic identity on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A high score on the scale represents a stronger athletic identification. The possible range of scores is 10-70. Brewer et al. (1993) reported a high 14-day test-retest reliability for the AIMS (.89) and strong internal consistency (alpha coefficients ranging from .81 to .93). Sample questions from AIMS are “I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport” and “Sport is the most important part of my life.”

*Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale.* This scale (Appendix C) was developed by the researcher, based on a literature review, to assess the participants’ perceptions regarding influence of athletic and non-athletic events on their quality of life following their retirement from collegiate athletics. This instrument measures the level of characteristics related to athletic career satisfaction, athletic career termination, level of preparedness for post-athletics life, and social concerns with athletic career termination. The instrument was developed on a 5-point ranking scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A low score on the scale represents difficulty in the athletic retirement transition process. The possible range of scores is 28-40. Sample questions from the instrument are “I believe that it will be difficult to achieve satisfaction in a pursuit outside of my sport” and “I believe that the career skills I have right now will aid in my transition out of collegiate athletics.”
**Focused Interviews.** The focused interviews (Appendix D) were designed to add richness to the survey data and better describe each student-athlete’s individual experience. Questions were developed based on a review of the literature and a pilot ethnography in Spring 2006 to better understand the student-athlete’s athletic and academic background, success in college, transition out of athletics, and career planning. Sample questions included “How old were you when you began playing your sport?,” “Why did you choose to attend Clemson University?,” and “How did you feel at your last college competition?”

**Variables**

The first of the two independent variables in this study is the level of athletic identity based on the participants score on the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS). The second independent variable is the degree to which the student-athlete participated in career development programming. The dependent variable is the score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale. Additional independent variables that were generated by the demographic survey include: gender, race, and sport played.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were executed to analyze the demographic data of the population. Secondly, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test the first six hypotheses. The first null hypothesis stated that there will not be a statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. The second null hypothesis stated that there will not be
a statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. The third null hypothesis stated that there will not be a statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in revenue sports and the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in non-revenue sports. The fourth null hypothesis stated that there will not be a statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. The fifth null hypothesis stated that there will not be a statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. The sixth null hypothesis stated that there will not be a statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in revenue sports and the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in non-revenue sports.

A regression analysis was also conducted to determine if a higher athletic identity predicts the level of athletic career termination and if career planning predicts ability to transition out of athletics. The seventh null hypothesis was that student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who have a higher athletic identification will not have a significantly higher score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with
exhausted eligibility who have lower athletic identification. The eighth null hypothesis was that student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participate in career development programming will not score lower on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who does not participate in career development programming.

The constant comparison method was used to analyze the interview data and identify themes. Constant comparison is a method of analysis that is used in qualitative investigations (Dye et al., 2000). With the constant comparison method, interviews are first transcribed by the researcher and then, utilizing the transcriptions, the data are analyzed by categorizing (Dye et al.). Once the data have been categorized, each category is compared to look for differences or similarities within the data and the categories are then refined as needed (Dye et al.). To enhance the reliability of the study, code-recode strategy (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002) was utilized in which the researcher coded the data, left the analysis for a time, and then recoded the data and compared the two sets of coded material.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of athletic identity intercollegiate student-athletes have incorporated into their social identity. Additionally, participation of student-athletes in career development was explored to determine if such participation predicts the degree of ability to successfully transition from athlete to non-athlete at the time of exhausted eligibility. Factors such as gender, sport played, and race were also looked at to determine if there was a relationship with athletic career termination. This chapter presents response rate, data, and descriptive analyses for demographic characteristics, athletic identity, and exhausted eligibility transition. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a difference between demographic characteristics (race, gender, and type of sport played) and the level of athletic identity as well as the level of athletic transition. Additionally, the regression model summaries are presented for the seventh and eighth hypotheses. This chapter also presents the data from the 15 former student-athletes gathered through focused interviews.

Response Rate

This study yielded a return rate on the survey instruments of 63% with 53 out of the 84 former student-athletes participating. All of the 15 former student-athletes asked to participate in the focused interview portion of the study consented to participate.
Descriptive Analysis

Demographic information was collected using the Demographic Information Questionnaire. The demographic variables included gender, race, age, type of sport played (revenue or non-revenue), and athletic scholarship status. A summary of the demographic variables is presented in Table 1.

The distribution of gender of the 53 survey participants was 21 males (39.6%) and 32 females (60.4%). The race distribution of the 53 survey participants was 37 White (69.8%) and 15 other races (28.3%). One survey participant did not complete the race question. The average age of the sample was 22.6 years old with the distribution of the 53 survey participants being one twenty-one-year-old (1.9%), 23 twenty-two-year-olds (43.4%), 16 twenty-three-year-olds (30.2%), five twenty-four-year-olds (9.4%), and one twenty-five-year-old (1.9%). Seven participants did not complete the age question on the questionnaire.

The type of sport played was designated as either revenue or non-revenue. For this study, the revenue sports were identified as: Baseball, Football, Men’s Basketball, and Women’s Basketball. The non-revenue sports consisted of: Men’s Golf, Men’s Soccer, Women’s Soccer, Men’s Swimming & Diving, Women’s Swimming & Diving, Men’s Tennis, Women’s Tennis, Men’s Track & Field, Women’s Track & Field, Women’s Volleyball, and Women’s Rowing. Of the 53 survey participants, 13 played revenue sports (24.5%) and 40 played non-revenue sports (75.5%).

Data were collected to determine the number of participants who received an athletic scholarship to compete in intercollegiate sport. The distribution for the 53 survey
participants was 45 did receive an athletic scholarship (84.9%), two did not receive an athletic scholarship (3.8%), and six participants did not complete the question (11.3%).

Table 1. Demographic Information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Races</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Sport</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Revenue</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athletic Scholarship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>84.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Athletic Identity**

Data were collected using the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) (Brewer et al., 1993). The inventory measures the strength of athletic identity on a 7-
point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A stronger athletic identification is represented by a higher score on the AIMS. High 14-day test-retest reliability was reported for the AIMS (.89) and the alpha coefficients range from .81 to .93, indicating a strong internal consistency (Brewer et al. 1993). The Cronbach’s alpha for the AIMS in this study was .91.

The mean for each question on the AIMS was tabulated using each of the 53 student-athlete’s responses. Table 2 presents the mean scores of each individual AIMS item. The items in Table 2 are represented in the order in which they appeared on the instrument completed by the student-athletes. The instrument used a 7-point Likert-scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Table 2. Individual AIMS Questions and Mean Scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIMS Statement</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I consider myself an athlete</td>
<td>6.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have many goals related to sports</td>
<td>5.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Most of my friends are athletes</td>
<td>5.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sport is the most important part of my life</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I need to participate in sport to feel good about myself</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Other people see me mainly as an athlete</td>
<td>4.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport</td>
<td>4.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sport is the only important thing in my life</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Means calculated from a scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7)
Athletic Identity

The overall mean athletic identity score for the 53 participants was 45.62, which is a sum score based on the ten questions on the AIMS. The range of scores was 10-68. See Table 3 for mean athletic identity score and standard deviation for athletic identity score.

Table 3. Mean Athletic Identity Score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletic Identity</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Athletic Identity</td>
<td>45.62</td>
<td>12.314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine if there was a statistical difference across the mean score for athletic identity by gender, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. There was no statistical difference at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, we failed to reject $H_0$; there was no difference between the level of athletic identification for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. ANOVA of Overall Mean Athletic Identity by Gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>21.301</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.301</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>15776.171</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>309.337</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15797.472</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a statistical difference between the mean score for athletic identity by race as well as by
type of sport played. There was no statistical difference by race at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, we failed to reject Ho_2; there was no difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. ANOVA of Overall Mean Athletic Identity by Race.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>721.756</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>240.585</td>
<td>1.656</td>
<td>.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>6971.552</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>145.241</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7693.308</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no statistical difference by type of sport played at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, we failed to reject H_{03}; there was no difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in revenue sports and the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in non-revenue sports. Results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. ANOVA of Overall Mean Athletic Identity by Type of Sport Played.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>7884.113</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>154.590</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7884.453</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exhausted Eligibility Transition

The Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale was developed to assess the participants’ perceptions of how athletic and non-athletic events impact their quality of life. The scale was developed for transitioning student-athletes to complete following their exhaustion of eligibility from collegiate athletics. This instrument measures characteristics related to athletic career satisfaction, athletic career termination, level of preparedness for post-athletics life, and social concerns with athletic career termination. A low score on the scale represents difficulty in the exhausted eligibility transition process. The Cronbach’s Alpha for the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale was .68.

The mean for each question on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale was tabulated using each of the 53 student-athlete’s responses. See Table 7 for the mean scores of each individual Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale item. The items in Table 7 are represented in the order in which they appeared on the instrument completed by the student-athletes. The instrument used a 5-point Likert-scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Table 7. Individual Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale Items and Mean Scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am satisfied with the achievement of the athletic goals I set for my collegiate career.</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am disappointed that my athletic career will not extend to the professional level</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I obtain satisfaction from participating in my collegiate sport, and am concerned that I will not achieve the same level of satisfaction when I exhaust my athletic eligibility</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The athletic goals I set for myself at the beginning of my collegiate career</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
have been met
5. It will be difficult to achieve satisfaction in a pursuit outside of my sport 2.19
6. I have thought about what I will do the first 2-3 years of my career 4.06
   following the end of my college athletic career
7. I decided what my first job will be following graduation 3.57
8. I know the steps I need to take to apply for graduate school or look for a 3.94
   job
9. The education I received while in college has prepared me for either 4.00
   graduate school or a full-time job
10. Being an athlete is the most important part of my life 2.38
11. I think that other people value me mostly for my athletic skills 2.58
12. I feel best about myself when laying a sport 3.25
13. I can easily see myself having an identity other than athlete 3.25
14. I think it will be difficult for others to see me as something other than as 2.79
   an athlete when I graduate
15. My athletic career was a major influence on the development of my 3.66
   identity
16. I am concerned with maintaining my fitness after graduation 4.40
17. I am concerned that it will be hard to maintain a healthy lifestyle when I 3.42
   graduate
18. I believe that the career skills I have right now will aid in my transition 3.90
   from athlete to non-athlete
19. My final game of my college career was the hardest day of my life 2.35
20. I have put a lot of time and energy into my sport, but I will be able to 3.79
   move on to other pursuits when my athletic career is over
21. I know that it will be difficult to replace this experience because I have 3.79
   invested so much physically and mentally into my sport,
22. Transitioning out of my sport will be difficult because of how much I 3.35
   personally invested into my athletic career
23. I know it will be difficult to find new opportunities to invest my time and 2.90
   energy in following the end of intercollegiate athletics
24. I believe that it will be easy for me to develop a new social network when 3.44
   I graduate
25. I believe that it will be easy for me to develop a new social network when 3.56
   I exhaust my eligibility
26. I think it will be difficult for me to get involved in activities not relating 2.69
   to sports after I graduate
27. Moving away from my college teammates will make it difficult for me to 3.08
   transition out of athletics
Exhausted Eligibility Transition

The overall mean exhausted eligibility transition score for the 53 participants was 89.17, which is a sum score based on the 28 questions on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale. The range of scores was 55-114. See Table 8 for mean exhausted eligibility transition score and standard deviation for the athletic identity score.

Table 8. Mean Exhausted Eligibility Transition Score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletic Retirement Transition</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Transition</td>
<td>89.17</td>
<td>17.430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to determine if there was a statistical difference across the mean score for exhausted eligibility transition by gender, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. There was no statistical difference at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, we failed to reject Ho;

there was no statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. See Table 9 for results.

Table 9. ANOVA of Overall Mean Exhausted Eligibility Transition by Gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>7.346</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.933</td>
<td>.578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>5.333</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12.679</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a statistical difference between the mean score for exhausted eligibility transition by race. There was no statistical difference at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, we failed to reject $H_0$; there was no statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. See Table 10 for results.

Table 10. ANOVA of Overall Mean Exhausted Eligibility Transition by Race.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>64.183</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>64.183</td>
<td>.468</td>
<td>.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>6864.490</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>137.290</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6928.673</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no statistical difference at the .05 level of significance for type of sport played. Therefore, we failed to reject $H_0$; there was no statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in revenue sports and the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in non-revenue sports. See Table 11 for results.

Table 11. ANOVA of Overall Mean Athletic Retirement Transition by Type of Sport Played.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1907.462</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>146.728</td>
<td>.957</td>
<td>.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>5976.900</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>153.256</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7884.453</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regression Model for Athletic Identity and Exhausted Eligibility Transition

For research hypothesis 7, a sum score was calculated for both athletic identity and exhausted eligibility transition. A linear regression model was conducted using the athletic identity sum score as the criterion variable and the exhausted eligibility transition sum score as the predictor variable.

The regression analysis summary for exhausted eligibility transition and athletic identity revealed an R of .655, an $R^2$ of .429, with a t-value of 6.188. Thus, the model was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the level of athletic identity is a predictor of athletic transition. Therefore, $H_{07}$ was rejected; student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who have a higher athletic identification had a significantly lower score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who had lower athletic identification. See Table 12 for the results of the regression analysis.

Table 12. Analysis of Variance Summary Table and Multiple Regression Analysis for Athletic Identity and Exhausted Eligibility Transition.

ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>6774.428</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6774.428</td>
<td>38.290</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>9023.044</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>176.922</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15797.472</strong></td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>46.880</td>
<td>7.074</td>
<td>6.627</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regression Model for Exhausted Eligibility Transition

For research hypothesis 8, a sum score was calculated for exhausted eligibility transition. A linear regression model was conducted using the exhausted eligibility transition sum score as the criterion variable and the number of career development programs the participant attended as the predictor variable. The regression analysis summary for career development participation and exhausted eligibility transition revealed an $R$ of .090, an $R^2$ of .008, with a t-value of .645. Thus, the model was not statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. The number of career development programs attended is not a predictor for the student-athletes ability to transition out of sport. Therefore, we failed to reject $H_0$; student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participate in career development programming did not score significantly lower on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who did not participate in career development programming. See Table 13 for the results of the regression analysis.

Table 13. Analysis of Variance Summary Table and Multiple Regression Analysis for Career Development Participation and Exhausted Eligibility Transition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANOVA</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>127.780</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>127.780</td>
<td>.416</td>
<td>.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>15669.692</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>307.249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>15797.472</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>86.156</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.387</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Career Development Programs Attended</td>
<td>1.210</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. R = .090, R^2 = .008*

Interview Participant Profiles

The focused interviews consisted of one-on-one interviews with 15 former student-athletes of diverse demographic backgrounds (see Table 14). All of the interview participants had exhausted eligibility after having participated in intercollegiate athletics for four years.

Table 14. Demographics of Interview Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Scholarship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Women’s Track</td>
<td>Other races</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Men’s Track</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Parks, Rec, &amp; Tourism Mgt</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Men’s Track</td>
<td>Other races</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Other races</td>
<td>Electrical Engineering</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Other races</td>
<td>Parks, Rec, &amp; Tourism Mgt</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Other races</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick</td>
<td>Men’s Basketball</td>
<td>Other races</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>Men’s Soccer</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>Women’s</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emerging Themes

Attributes associated with transitional difficulties of the retiring student-athletes emerged when performing an analysis of the data. Multiple themes were identified that exposed the underlying problem of an unsuccessful transition from athlete to non-athlete in those interviewed. In the case of the student-athletes who were experiencing athletic retirement, loss became one of the main emerging themes with four subthemes. The four subthemes of loss were: a) an overall loss of identity, b) a loss of social network and mentors, c) a loss of structure, and d) a loss of motivation. The student-athletes have spent the majority of their lives as an athlete, competing at a very high level. As their athletic career came to an end, the sense of where they are, where they are going, and who they are connected to have started to become blurred for the first time. Three additional themes emerged and those were: an identification of athlete by the community at large, a lack of career preparation, and the opportunity to experience college as a typical student.

Loss

The final competition for the student-athletes brought many different emotions, but an overriding sense of loss. The student-athletes discussed a sense of initial relief as the physical and mental demands and pressures they had been under for four years were
now over. Sally, a female soccer player and computer science major, mentioned how
difficult it is to play a college sport in terms of staying mentally tough. She said, “I think
just trying to be mentally ready for everything all the time, for your classes and for
practice, just is so hard to stay with all the time. I think that’s the hardest part of it, just
the mental aspect of it.” Pam, a female volleyball player and biological sciences major,
said, “I just feel like I fell off the face of the earth.” For most of the student-athletes, the
time the former student-athletes put into their sport was tremendous, 20-plus hours a
week during the academic year as well as time during the summer and breaks from
school. Rick, a male basketball player and sociology major, discussed this by saying,
“…it’s [playing a sport] a really challenging thing to do day in and day out. It’s almost a
yearly thing, there’s not an off-season. It’s always in-season and there’s always work to
do.” The former student-athletes prepared for four years for each competition with
tenacity and were often not prepared for the emotions that came with the conclusion of
their collegiate athletic careers.

This initial sense of relief that came with the conclusion of the student-athlete’s
athletic career soon turned into uneasiness as the understanding of what the conclusion
meant began to set in. Sandra, a women’s soccer player and a biological sciences major,
stated, “…[I was] just upset I guess. I didn’t want to really talk to anybody.” She added,
“It was miserable ‘cause we don’t have that chance anymore. Like we’ll never get to play
for the university again.” Steve, a member of the men’s track team and a management
major, agreed that his last competition was difficult and added, “You know, when I put
on the uniform for the last time, I knew that this was the last time that it counts, you
know, uh, so it was kind of tough emotionally for me.” The last competitions of their careers were difficult for the student-athletes because they finally realized that they were no longer going to be competing for their school or in their sport, at that level, again.

The realization that the student-athletes would no longer competitively play the sport, which the student-athletes had competed in for the majority of their lives, proved to be a difficult realization to muster. Amanda, a member of the women’s swimming and diving team and a biological science major, said, “It was just kind of surreal, like, I can’t believe that four years had gone by and you stuck with this one thing [swimming] for four years. But it was pretty emotional and I didn’t want it to end.” Vicki, a female volleyball player and a management major, stated, “It was sad because everything that I had worked for my whole life with my sport was just over. Just like that.” The student-athletes felt as though they had put so much time and energy into their sport and they felt a part of them was being lost with the final competition. Sarah, a member of the women’s track team and a marketing major, said, “The last home game was really emotional just because, you’re just like, all the blood, sweat, and tears and practice and work is just, ending.” David, a football player and an electrical engineering major, said that “…it’s definitely been sad and the challenging part is getting over the, you know, that I am done [playing] and I have to move on.” For four years, the former student-athletes focused on achieving success in the athletic arena and the conclusion on their athletic careers brought loss. The participants described a loss of identity, loss of social network and mentors, loss of structure, and a loss of motivation.
Loss of Identity

As the former student-athletes described what feelings they had in their last collegiate competitions and the period of transition since completing their intercollegiate careers, it became evident that the former student-athletes were struggling with knowing who they were here in the present. As Daniel, a member of the football team and parks, recreation, and tourism management major said, “I’ve been an athlete basically my whole life. I started playing organized sports in sixth grade. But I’ve been playing sports forever, since I can remember.” When asked about the transition, Pam stated, “I always said, oh I’m a student first, I’m a student first. But as soon as I was an absolute non-athlete, as soon as I stopped playing my sport, I realized that the athlete thing was my identity. It’s an identity crisis.” While during her playing career Pam would have defined herself as a student before athlete, she realized that her perception of herself had been false and she is now struggling with finding her new identity since she is no longer associated with her sport.

During the transition from athlete to non-athlete, the former student-athletes experienced an uncertainty about who they are now that they are no longer athletes. Patty, a female soccer player and parks, recreation, and tourism management major, said that she does not know who she is anymore, “It really is an identity crisis when you’re done ‘cause my whole life I’ve been a soccer player and now I’m just Patty, the retired soccer player.” Patty also stated that she “still feels like I’m just taking a break and maybe will lace the cleats up soon.” The former student-athletes are still associating themselves with
their sport by saying that they are a retired athlete but many do not know with what other identities they can now associate themselves.

Ryan, a member of the men’s swimming and diving team and marketing major, described his transition as, “…you just feel lost.” The student-athletes are known by their peers, professors, and communities as athletes, as individuals who play a given sport, and that identity, that person, for all practical purposes, no longer exists. As Amanda said, “You’re really in an identity crisis when you’re done [playing sports].”

Through his experiences as a football player, Tyler, a football student-athlete and management major, had witnessed many of his former teammates experience problems of identity loss, “I think a lot of guys get caught up in that definition of being defined as a football player, and like, like when it ends, how do you differentiate yourself.” Tyler continued by saying, “…[there] are a lot of demanding expectations that go along with football,” and these demands that are made by the coaches as well as the community as a whole often do not allow for the student-athletes to participate in other activities, creating the central identity of athlete. Sally also felt she was an athlete even with the conclusion of her athletic career. She said, “I probably think of myself as an athlete. I mean, I think I have definitely exceeded my expectations in how I was going to do in school but I will always identify with my sport.”

The sport that the student-athletes participated in during their college experience is often one that they have played for the majority of their lives. The student-athletes have to determine a way to take these experiences and move on with their lives. As Vicki stated, “I haven’t had any regrets but it’s definitely been sad and the challenging part is
getting over the, you know, that I am done and having to move on.” Sandra echoed the thought by saying, “I was ready to move on to a different part of my life but I mean the friends, the memories I have, that’s something that I will never get just because I will never be part of a team like that so… I don’t think I was ready.”

**Loss in Social Network/Mentors**

The participants discussed the connection with the people with whom they participated in athletics. Their former teammates are their best friends, people they associate with, and were often described as their “family”. With the completion of their athletic career, the informants saw their interaction with this group of people diminish. Vicki said, “Your team is your family, your friends, they’re your everything.” David said, “They’re still my friends or whatever, it’s just, just not seeing them all the time, that’s kind of tough.” As the former student-athletes are no longer participating in practice and do not see their teammates on a daily basis any longer, there is a loss in the student-athlete’s social network. Patty felt like since her athletic experience ended, she no longer had the friends in her teammates, “…not having friends that you used to, I mean you still have the friends on your team but you’re used to spending probably 20 hours with them a week and you go to spending probably an hour with some of them. It’s just different.” While the former student-athletes felt as though they were still friends with their teammates, they felt as though they missed much of the interaction with the group since they were no longer attending practice.

The time demands associated with participating in college athletics often prevents the student-athletes from getting involved in other activities around campus. Sally said,
Just with Greek Life being so big here, being a student-athlete you’re not able to be in a sorority or fraternity. There was one girl on our team that was in a sorority but she wasn’t able to go to any of the functions or anything because it’s time consuming being a student-athlete.

Chris, a member of the men’s track and field team and a parks, recreation, and tourism management major, stated, “I was in the off-road club but I missed out on going on weekend rips a lot because of competing and because of training.” While some student-athletes may have a desire to get involved in activities outside of athletics, it is often difficult to do so due to the time associated with athletics. This lack of involvement in other activities restricts the social networking opportunities for the student-athletes.

The student-athletes once spent the majority of their day with this tight knit group of friends and with the conclusion of their athletic career, it became hard for them to stay connected. Sarah expressed, “You don’t know what to do with yourself anymore, because your teammates, your family, your friends, they’re everything. I still talk to them all the time, but you’re not there every day.” Kyle, a male soccer player and biological sciences major, stated, “It’s just hard ‘cause you are with these people for every day for four years and you kind of realize that you don’t really have too many people that you know outside of the athletic world or whatever, outside of Clemson athletics.” Chris added,

I hung out with my teammates a lot. Um, I spent most of my time with them, I mean, I had some friends outside of my sport and I hung out with them too but just with traveling you know, being on a bus or a plane with just those guys and spending the weekend with them made the experience much better.
Over the four year period the student-athletes participate in intercollegiate athletics, fellow athletes and athletics as a whole becomes the student-athlete’s social network and when the athletics career is completed, the social network is often taken away as well.

Even not being a part of practice had created a sense of loss for the former student-athletes and their social interactions because this is something which they are no longer a part. Rick said, “You see your teammates and they all have practice and stuff but you’re not out there so the whole sense of being involved in a team isn’t really there anymore.” Daniel also felt as though he no longer fit in socially due to not being at practice, “…you’re going to miss stuff because a lot goes on at practice that you’re not going to be a part of anymore.” Participants also described a desire to remain connected to their former teammates and friends but found it difficult because they were no longer at practice every day to know what was going on in the lives of their teammates.

For many student-athletes, collegiate athletics opens doors to travel that they may not have the opportunity to experience in the past. While these new opportunities for travel have emerged, the student-athletes have completed this travel as a group. As their athletic careers come to an end, there still may be opportunities to travel, but it is no longer with the structure of the team. Tyler discussed the loneliness of travel without his teammates, “…having people around you to, I guess, make you feel more comfortable when you’re away instead of being alone in this place you’ve never been before.” While athletics had provided the opportunity for travel, student-athletes who are transitioning from athlete to non-athlete miss the camaraderie that they once had on team trips and a sense of loneliness sets in.
For the past four years, coaches have also played an important role in the lives of the student-athletes. The coaches recruited the students to the university and have played a pivotal role in the lives of the student-athletes. Amanda talked about the relationship that is developed with the coaches as, “You end up being closer to your coaches than you are to your parents at certain times just because you’re always with them. I will really miss them.”

With the completion of their athletic careers, the students, especially participants in the non-revenue sports, felt as though their coaches had abandoned them and no longer cared. Sally said, “For four years as an athlete you are so wanted but when you’re done, they don’t care. They’re on to the next people.” Sandra said, “You lose the framework of people who are just right there staying on top of you for everything. Now nobody asks how classes are going but before all the coaches would be like, ‘how’s it going?’.” Sandra added, “You just go from being so important to just being like, you still matter but you don’t matter as much as you used to matter.” The coaches had served as mentors for the student-athletes and as they transitioned out of sport, the student-athletes felt as though they were losing the support system that had been in place for the past four years.

Athletes who played revenue sports agreed that the coaches no longer seemed to care, but Daniel also understood that the “coaches have to move on because they have a job to do.” Some members of the group attempted to stay connected to their coaches by “stopping by” their office or working out in the athletic weight room. Steve stated, “I can still go in there [the coach’s office]. He’s someone I can talk to.” From the former student-athletes’ perspective, in order to stay connected with their former teammates and
coaches, the former athletes themselves have to take the measures to create the lasting relationship by maintaining the line of communication.

Loss of Structure

The majority of Division I student-athletes have been participating in their given sport since they were a very young age. In addition to local recreation leagues and school teams, many student-athletes participated with youth club teams, AAU teams, Junior Olympic teams, or other traveling teams. These are commitments that required the student-athletes, in some cases, to travel an hour each way to and from practice, three times a week and spend their weekends traveling to competitions. As the student-athletes made the transition to intercollegiate athletics, the practice and competition schedules and travel demands intensified. With this commitment came a structure to the day and, as Patty stated, “…for four years you’re so used to a set schedule. It’s hard to get a set routine.” Chris added, “You have a set schedule of when you have time to do work, when you have time to go to class, and when you have to go to practice.” Daniel said, “The past four years have been like clockwork, you know, your schedule’s pretty much been set. It’s kind of hard getting back to setting your own schedule.” David added, “You almost get bored ‘cause you’re so used to having your time filled up. I enjoyed it at first but now I’m starting to be like, what can I do with myself?” The student-athletes were told when to go to class, when to go to practice, when they needed to return to school and in each of these activities, participation was prescribed.

With the completion of their athletic careers, the structure that was present for the majority of their lives is gone. “It’s how I’ve been since I was five years old, being
structured with everything and now I’m not structured at all,” stated Amanda. Pam added, “It’s the most free-time I’ve had in my life just ‘cause my sport has been part of my life since I was seven years old.” Chris noted, “These past couple of weeks, I have noticed that I haven’t been eating as much as I like. Your scheduling is off, your body doesn’t know what’s going on because it is not used to it.” The lack of structure leaves the student-athletes wondering what they should do with their time.

Initially, the lack of practice and structure is perceived as a much needed break. Rick has been using his free-time to relax saying, “I’ve been, I did that [played basketball] for 4 years, so I thought I needed to take a break. So this is my break.” However, the novelty begins to wear off and the need for structure emerges once again. Sally said, “It’s been a lot of free time. There at first, it’s nice, it’s like, wow, what do I do now. I can do this or that. After the third or fourth week, you’re missing it.” Ryan agreed, saying that, “I almost don’t know what to do with my time.” Patty added, “Now it’s like, I have all this free-time so it’s so much harder to be like, ok, I have to sit down and study when I know I can just do it later.” This loss of structure makes the transition from athlete to non-athlete more difficult because the group has not yet learned how to fill the voids in their days and move past their athletic careers.

The student-athletes continue to desire a schedule that is structured and have begun to find new activities, such as sleeping, working out, and studying, to fill their time. Patty has found that she has needed to learn how to create a schedule for herself in order to stay motivated and accomplish the tasks at hand. She said, “I kind of make a little schedule for myself every day, um, kind of just see what exactly I need to get done.”
Learning to create and implement a schedule for class, studying, and working out seems to allow the former student-athletes to return to the structured life they have been accustomed to their whole lives.

**Loss of Motivation**

The participants discussed difficulty in finding motivation to go to class and to workout. The former student-athletes expressed concern with health issues associated with not working out daily. However, they have had to work so hard, mentally and physically, to reach the pinnacle of athletic success at the Division I level, which has taken a toll on their bodies. The unforgiving demands on the student-athletes during youth athletics and over the past four years of college have caused a sense of physical “burn-out” and a lack of motivation to work both physically and mentally. “I am just physically and mentally tired,” said Rick. Rick continued by saying, “…you have nothing left to give, like with me I almost lost my passion to compete in terms of academics ‘cause I like to compete in the classroom like I do on the field.” Pam added, “I’m just mentally tired, just kind of tired all over and kind of like you don’t want to think. Even if you’re just watching TV, you just space out.” Patty said that she was having trouble with “Motivation, period. Even like, getting up and going to class and doing things” seemed to be difficult during this transition period.

The lack of motivation that many of the student-athletes are feeling also seems to be a contributing factor to another activity, sleeping. For four or five years the student-athletes had early morning workouts, class all day, practice, weights, and study hall. This made it difficult to get the necessary amount of sleep so some are using their free-time to
catch up on the hours of sleep they missed during their years as athletes. When asked what she has been doing with her free-time, Pam stated that she has been “Sleeping a lot more than usual.” The extra sleep time that the former student-athletes were finding may be a means for their bodies to recuperate from the physical and mental demands but may also be attributed to the lack of motivation to complete tasks during the transitional period.

This new sense of freedom contributed to some of the former student-athletes having a false sense of time. Amanda stated “I have so much free-time now that I feel like I can keep putting my school work off. I say that I’ll do it later and then I start running out of time.” Participants also discussed their lack of desire to go to class. Sarah said, “There are just days you just don’t want to go to class and sometimes those days turn into two or three days of it. Sometimes it is a week of it.” The participants knew that no one from the Athletic Department would be checking class for attendance, as had been done while they were competing, and they were not motivated to attend.

While the participants discussed wanting to maintain a healthy fitness level, they often found it difficult to motivate themselves. Kyle said, “…even though I know what my ultimate goal is, it is very hard [to continue to train] on my own.” Sandra agreed saying, “I think when I have to get up to work out, it is a struggle for me everyday just ‘cause when I think of fitness I think of get on the line and run.” Vicki said that, “…trying to stay in shape on my own is definitely harder ‘cause there’s no one there telling me to do it at this time of the day.” Pam added, “The hardest thing for me is motivation to work out since I have been used to having my workout planned in already
with practice. It’s just a different lifestyle.” The former student-athletes are struggling to find the balance between maintaining a healthy lifestyle and being in top competitive shape. After a lifetime of training at a very competitive level and maintaining a physically and mentally fit body, it is difficult for the former student-athletes to find a satisfying balance and maintain the motivation necessary to achieve in the classroom, in work, and future endeavors.

When making the transition from athlete to non-athlete, the transitioning student-athletes experienced an overwhelming sense of loss. The student-athletes had been athletes for the majority of their lives and with the exhausted eligibility came a sense of unknowing about who they now were. Within the theme of loss, the student-athlete athletes expressed a loss in four different areas: a loss of identity, a loss of social network and mentors, a loss of structure, and a loss of motivation. The four areas of loss made the adjustment from athlete to non-athlete difficult as the student-athletes no longer knew who they were and the student-athletes no longer had a strong support system to aid in making a successful transition. In addition to the themes of loss, the student-athletes identified three additional themes related to the experiences of transiting from athlete to non-athlete: identification of athlete by the community, lack of career preparation, and the opportunity for a typical college experience.

Identification of Athlete by Community

While the former student-athletes understand that their athletic career has come to a conclusion, the community at large has continued to identify the former student-athlete as such, making it difficult to complete the transition. Sandra discussed the environment
of the university and how athletics is a large part of the campus climate. She stated, “…I
mean, the environment here is built for athletics I guess. Like when people support you,
it’s just awesome.” The former student-athletes have lived in an environment for the past
four years that has been supportive athletically and because of this support, the student-
athletes have been known, by the community as a whole, as an athlete.

When part of the campus climate is structured around athletics, and much of the
community associates the athlete with his or her sport, it is difficult to shift from athlete
to non-athlete in the eyes of peers. Pam stated, “…that is just who I’m known as on
campus here. Just the tall volleyball player.” Vicki echoed Pam’s thoughts by stating,
“…first and foremost I was an athlete in the eyes of my peers and in the eyes of my
professors.” Vicki continued by saying that now, in her graduate work, she has to play
catch-up to her peers and, “I have to prove myself. Being an athlete, it carries a
stigma,…a negative stigma.”

Additionally, the student-athletes felt as though they stood out generally in their
classes, again being identified by their professors and peers as athletes. Tyler said, “I
really don’t get recognized much as a student, it’s more of being an athlete.” Tyler added
that it “can be a little frustrating [to be identified as an athlete] just because people
sometimes think that athletes have more benefits [than non-athletes] in the class.” Sandra
said, “We get a lot of recognition and in your classes you really stand out. You definitely
stand out.” Amanda added, “For the people [classmates] in school, they are so surprised
that I would spend so much time working and playing my sport and, like, devote so much
time to that when I had a big test the next day.”
The athletic gear that is issued to the student-athletes by the athletic department also contributes to the student-athletes being identified as an athlete by the community at large. Many of the student-athletes choose to wear their athletic gear around campus and to class. Steve said, “When I would go to class, um, I would see a lot of athletes dressing out in what they’re issued at the athletic department as far as, um, gear, shoes.” Patty thinks that because she still wears athletic gear to class, her professors and peers do not realize that she is no longer an athlete. She said, “When I go to class I wear a t-shirt that says athletics across it and you just group yourself, you sit with other athletes in class. I’m sure the professors just see me and associate me as an athlete.” The clothes that the student-athletes wear that help to identity them as athletes to the community are still worn by many of the former athletes, maintaining the athlete identification by others.

While the campus community continues to identify the former student-athlete as an athlete, the larger community does as well. Often this extends away from campus into the former student-athlete’s family. As Kyle stated, “…all of my friends from home know that it [athletics] is a huge part of my life and I mean all of my relatives now know about all of my accomplishments and stuff like that so. They all know that is what I do.” Steve said, “I don’t think a lot of people realize that I’m finished because every single day, people are like, oh, do you have practice, when are your games, are you ready for next year?”

Lack of Career Preparation

As an athlete, with each new season brings a new set of goals, both team oriented goals and individual goals. Prior to beginning college and into the first couple years of
college, all of the participants had athletic dreams and goals of becoming a professional athlete or a member of the national team in their given sport. Three of the student-athletes interviewed, Chris, Steve, and Patty, were still training in their sport with hopes of playing professionally, but the remaining interviewees had given up the dream of professional athletics. As their intercollegiate athletic career came to an end, the dream of these goals, for the majority of the student-athletes, had also come to an end. Because the focus of their life, to this point, has been athletics and how they can reach the next level, the former student-athletes did not consider the direction their life would take at the completion of their playing career. Pam said, “I need to start thinking about that [future goals]. What I really want to do with my life. Just ‘cause I never had to think of that because it was just soccer.” Daniel added, “It’s just a matter of figuring out where I want to be and exactly what I what to do.” The student-athletes also felt as though their non-athlete peers had a greater opportunity to prepare for life after college. Rick said, “Athletes, you know, have a shorter amount of time to get themselves prepared and have to get themselves over the hump of being done.” Non-athletes have greater opportunities to engage in career development activities such as internships and part-time jobs and do not have the added adjustment of terminating an athletic career at the end of the college experience.

Additionally, the participants discussed how they had never had a job that was not related to their sport and now that they are considering post-athletic life, they are questioning if they have the skill set necessary to find success in a professional working position. David said “I don’t have a lot of background work just because the downside of
being an athlete is that you don’t get much job experience ‘cause you just don’t have time for it.” Because of the typical schedule of a student-athlete, most are unable to work during the academic year so the summer provides the only opportunity to gain work experience. Vicki said, “Every summer I played club ball and I’ve worked for the coaches running campus.” Pam added, “Every experience, working wise, has been working with my sport.” Sarah said that during the summer she would “…run and condition at home and I would get a job just working at the golf course.” The former student-athletes dedicated most of their college summers to continuing to train for the upcoming seasons, which did not leave much time for summer jobs. For the student-athletes who did manage to work during the summer, the positions they held were related to athletics and not their major or career aspirations.

The jobs that the transitioning student-athletes had in the past were typically related to their sport and there was a sense of concern as to whether they would have the necessary skills and experience to find a professional position. “It’s going to be a challenge to find a job and figure out where I’m going to go.” The lack of solidified career goals has created a sense of apprehension and uncertainty in the minds of the student-athletes. Sally commented, “As for my future, I kind of wonder. Will I make it even though I’m not prepared?” Sarah discussed not having planned for her future and as she is about to graduate, she still “Is not exactly sure what I want to do [for a career].” The lack of career goals has forced the student-athletes to shift their focus from athletics to something else and in many situations, the shift is in favor of school work. This shift
gives the student-athletes an opportunity to find a new niche as well as provide some structure, filling the void of athletics.

**Opportunity for Typical College Experience**

The conclusion of the athletic career brought with it a sense of social freedom for the student-athletes that they had not experienced before during their college careers. Many of the student-athletes discussed how they missed out on the typical social opportunities of college while competing in their sport. Chris said, “I probably missed out on some things that normal students get to do as far as socially.” Sandra discussed that with the conclusion of her athletic career she now has time to relax once class is over rather than going straight to train. She said, “…after class you can just hang out and go out more. Um, you have more time to like, do things with friends like, I mean teammates, but also people you normally wouldn’t get to hang out with. You’re able to have more fun.” Participating in college athletics often prevented the student-athletes from participating in campus activities other than sport and the former student-athletes were looking forward to having the opportunity to become involved in typical college experiences.

Some of the former student-athletes discussed how they now have the opportunity to participate in activities that had been limited to them due to the hectic athletic schedule of practice and competition. Patty said, “I’ve never been able to tailgate for a football game in the heat ‘cause we usually have a game the next day or we’re traveling so I’m excited about that, to be able to go to all the football games and get the life that a regular students has.” Vicki added that, “…this is the first time that I’ve had free-time and I’ve
gotten to experience college for just college like a regular college student.” The former student-athletes discussed that although the experiences that athletics provided could not be traded they were looking forward to being a “normal student.” The demands that had been placed on the student-athletes during their college careers did not afford much of an opportunity to become involved in activities outside of athletics and they had a desire to experience the freedom that they associated with a non-athlete student.

**Conclusions**

This chapter discussed the response rate and descriptive analysis for demographic characteristics of the studies’ participants. Additionally, mean scores for the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale and the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale were presented as well as an ANOVA of the overall mean for both athletic identity and athletic retirement transition by gender, race, and type of sport played. We failed to reject $H_0_1$; there was no statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. We failed to reject $H_0_2$; there was no statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. We failed to reject $H_0_3$; there was no statistically significant difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility that participate in revenue sports and the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility that participate in non-revenue sports. $H_0_4$ cannot be rejected; there was no statistically
significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. We failed to reject Ho$_5$; there was no statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. Finally, Ho$_6$ cannot be rejected: there was no statistically significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in revenue sports and the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in non-revenue sports.

A linear regression model was conducted using the athletic identity sum score as the criterion variable and the exhausted eligibility transition sum score as the predictor variable. H$_{07}$ was rejected; student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who had a higher athletic identification had a significantly higher score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who had lower athletic identification. A linear regression model was conducted using the exhausted eligibility transition sum score as the criterion variable and the number of career development programs the participant attended as the predictor variable. H$_{08}$ cannot be rejected; student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participate in career development programming did not score significantly lower on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who did not participate in career development programming.
This chapter also presented themes that emerged based on the interviews that were conducted with 15 former student-athletes. One of the main themes that were present was that of loss. The former student-athletes experienced a sense of loss of identity, loss of social networks and mentors, loss of structure, and a loss of motivation. The overall sense of loss that was present in the student-athletes created a personal environment for the former student-athletes that created a difficulty for this group to make the transition from athlete to non-athlete. Another theme that may be preventing the former student-athletes from experiencing a smooth transition from athlete to non-athlete is that different communities (family, friends, peers, and professors) continue to identify this group as athletes.

The participants also discussed a lack of career direction and goals prior to the conclusion of their athletic career. This lack of career preparedness has created a sense of worry on the part of the former student-athletes as to whether they had developed the skills necessary to be successful in a professional work environment. Finally, a positive theme that emerged is the participants’ excitement in their ability to experience the college they define as “typical” for a non-athlete. The former student-athletes expressed an interest in becoming involved in activities outside of athletics as well as having the opportunity to attend athletic competitions they had previously been unable to attend due to restrictions of their athletic practice and competition schedules.
Table 15. Summary of Results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>What is the degree to which student-athletes with exhausted eligibility have</td>
<td>• Mean = 45.62 with a possible range of scores between 10-70.</td>
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<td>incorporated an athletic identity into their persona?</td>
<td>• Above average level of athletic identity.</td>
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<td>What is the level of athletic transition loss of student-athletes with exhausted</td>
<td>• Mean = 89.17 with a possible range of scores between 28-140.</td>
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<td>eligibility?</td>
<td>• Above average ability to successfully transition out of athletics</td>
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<td>Are the levels of athletic identity for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility</td>
<td>• $H_01$ cannot be rejected; there was no significant difference between</td>
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<td>different based on demographic status?</td>
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<td>exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for female</td>
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<td>• $H_02$ cannot be rejected; there was no significant difference between</td>
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<td>the level of athletic identification for student-athletes of other races</td>
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<td>with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification White</td>
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<td>student-athletes with exhausted eligibility.</td>
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<td>• $H_03$ cannot be rejected; there was no significant difference between</td>
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<td>the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted</td>
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<td>identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility that</td>
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<td>participate in non-revenue sports.</td>
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<td>• $H_04$ cannot be rejected; there was no significant difference between</td>
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<td>the degree of athletic transition for male student-athletes with</td>
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<td>significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for</td>
<td>student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility.</td>
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<td>student-athletes with exhausted eligibility.</td>
<td>• $H_{06}$ cannot be rejected; there was no significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility that participate in revenue sports and the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility that participate in non-revenue sports.</td>
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<td>Is there a relationship between degree of athletic identity and level of</td>
<td>athletic transition loss in student-athletes with exhausted eligibility?</td>
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<td>athletic transition loss in student-athletes with exhausted eligibility?</td>
<td>• $H_{07}$ is rejected; student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who have a higher athletic identification had a significantly higher score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who had lower athletic identification.</td>
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<td>Does participation in career development programming aid student-athletes</td>
<td>with exhausted eligibility in their athletic transition loss?</td>
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<td>does participation in career development programming aid student-athletes</td>
<td>with exhausted eligibility who participated in career development programming did not score significantly lower on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who did not participate in career development programming.</td>
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<td>What is the overall effect of the transition from athlete to non-athlete</td>
<td>for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility?</td>
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<td>for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility?</td>
<td>• Loss:</td>
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<td>• Loss of Identity</td>
<td>• Loss of Social Networks/Mentors</td>
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<td>• Loss of Structure</td>
<td>• Loss of Motivation</td>
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<td>• Continued identification of the athletic identity by community can be</td>
<td>difficult for the student-athletes to transition</td>
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<td>• Lack of Career Preparation</td>
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<td>New opportunities for the student-athlete to experience the typical college life</td>
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CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between athletic identity and the level of athletic transition loss in student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. Additionally, this study looked to determine if participation in career development programming aids student-athletes with exhausted eligibility with the transition from athlete to non-athlete. This chapter contains a summary of the study, conclusions, discussion and implications, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted during the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008 with student-athletes with exhausted eligibility in a given sport during that time period. The sample population was generated at a mid-sized land-grant institution in the southeast United States that participates in NCAA Division I athletics.

As presented in Chapter III, all student-athletes who exhausted their athletic eligibility during either the fall of 2007 or spring of 2008 were emailed a link to the online survey instruments one month following the conclusion of the exhausted eligibility season. The survey instruments consisted of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), the Transition Retirement Scale, and a Demographic Survey. All qualifying participants were then emailed once a month for the next three months as a reminder of the survey and to, again, ask for participation. A stratified sample was taken of the eligible participants to generate a sample of focused interview participants. All 15 individuals who were asked to participate were interviewed upon consent. The interviews
were conducted in the researcher’s office, with the exception of one, which took place at a local mall food court.

Summary of the Results

As presented in Chapter IV, the overall mean sum score for the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) was 45.62, with a possible range of scores of 10-70. The overall mean sum score for the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale was 89.17, with a possible range of scores of 28-140.

Athletic Identity

The ANOVA concluded there was no statistically significant difference by gender for the overall mean score of athletic identity. Therefore, \( H_01 \) cannot be rejected; there was no difference between the level of athletic identification for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. Additionally, an ANOVA concluded that there was no statistically significant difference by race for the overall mean score of athletic identity. Therefore, \( H_02 \) cannot be rejected; there was no difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the level of athletic identification White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. Finally, there was no statistically significant difference by type of sport played for the overall mean score of athletic identity. Therefore, \( H_03 \) cannot be rejected; there was no difference between the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility that participate in revenue sports and the level of athletic identification for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility that participate in non-revenue sports.
Exhausted Eligibility Transition

The ANOVA concluded that there was no statistically significant difference for the overall mean score of exhausted eligibility transition by gender. Therefore, $H_o^4$ cannot be rejected; there was no significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for male student-athletes with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition for female student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. Additionally, an ANOVA concluded that there was no statistically significant difference by race for the overall mean score of exhausted eligibility transition. Therefore, $H_o^5$ cannot be rejected; there was no significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes of other races with exhausted eligibility and the degree of athletic transition White student-athletes with exhausted eligibility. Finally, there was no statistically significant difference by type of sport played for the overall mean score for athletic retirement transition. Therefore, $H_o^6$ cannot be rejected; there was no significant difference between the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility that participate in revenue sports and the degree of athletic transition for student-athletes with exhausted eligibility that participate in non-revenue sports.

Regression Analysis for Athletic Identity

The seventh hypothesis of this study was tested to determine if student-athletes who had a higher athletic identity would have a significantly higher score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with a lower athletic identity. $H_o^7$ was rejected, the regression analysis indicated that student-athletes who had a higher
athletic identity did have a significantly higher score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with a lower athletic identity. Therefore, athletic identity appears to be a predictor of a successful athletic transition.

**Regression Analysis for Athletic Transition**

The eighth hypothesis of this study was tested to determine if student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who participated in career development programming would have a significantly higher score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale than student-athletes with exhausted eligibility who did not participate in career development programming. The regression analysis indicated no significance, failing to reject $H_{08}$ at the .05 significance level. Therefore, it appears that participation in career development programming is not a predictor of a successful or unsuccessful transition from athlete to non-athlete.

**Themes of Focused Interviews**

In completing the analysis of the focused interviews, a central theme of loss emerged with four subthemes. The student-athletes with exhausted eligibility indicated that they felt loss in four major areas: a) identity, b) social network and mentors, c) structure, and d) motivation. Three additional themes emerged as the student-athletes transitioned from athlete to non-athlete. The first additional theme was that the participants felt as though within the community as a whole (campus and family), the participants were still viewed as “the athlete” even though their eligibility was exhausted. This continued to make the transition from athlete to non-athlete difficult due to the participants inability to move on from that athletic identity that was both self-defined and
peer-defined. The former student-athletes also discussed how a lack of career preparation during their four years of college had made this transition period one of uneasiness. Finally, the participants expressed excitement for the opportunity to participate in activities on the campus that they saw as “typical college student” activities, including joining campus organizations and attending athletic events as spectators.

Conclusions

Based upon the findings, the following six conclusions can be drawn from this study:

1) There is no significant difference in the level of athletic identification by race, gender, or type of sport played.

2) There is no significant difference in the degree of athletic transition by race, gender, or type of sport played.

3) Student-athletes with a higher athletic identity have a significantly higher transitional score (ability to transition out of sport), than student-athletes with a lower athletic identity.

4) There was not a significant difference in the athletic transition score between the student-athletes who participated in career development programming and those student-athletes who did not participant in career development programming.

5) The focused interviews indicated that student-athletes do have some difficulty in transitioning from athlete to non-athlete.
Discussion

Student-athletes who had a higher athletic identity had a significantly higher transition score, indicating an easier transition from athlete to non-athlete. This finding may be related to the difference, although not significant, in athletic identity between non-revenue student-athletes and revenue student-athletes. Non-revenue student-athletes had a higher athletic identity than revenue student-athletes which may be due to the non-revenue athletes playing their sport for the love of the game rather than for a full athletic scholarship or the public exposure who participants in revenue, especially male revenue, sports receive (Burstyn 2002; Coakley, 2007).

Further, athletic identity may be higher for non-revenue sport student-athletes due to the fact that there are fewer professional opportunities to continue playing their sport following college than for revenue student-athletes (Coakley, 1994) and this is especially true for female student-athletes. The student-athletes who compete in non-revenue sports understand the lack of professional opportunities following the completion of their intercollegiate career and may begin to prepare for the transition earlier than the student-athletes who participate in revenue sports. Because student-athletes in non-revenue sports receive less financial support in terms of scholarships and less public attention, as well as the fact that there are fewer professional opportunities than for those student-athletes participating in revenue sports, the non-revenue participants seem to have an easier transition from athlete to non-athlete.

There were no differences in the level of athletic identification between race and gender. Athletic identity can be defined as the extent to which a person identifies with the
athlete role (Brewer, et al., 1993). Athletic identity may be further developed by the stereotype that student-athletes were not as smart as traditional students (Sailes, 1996), and these stereotypes may be especially true for student-athletes who participate in revenue sports such as football and basketball. Further, the media have typically only shown the success of African American athletes in sports such as football and basketball that promise social mobility, giving the indication that these are the only sports that are socially appropriate for African Americans (Powell, 2008). Society and the media have dictated the sports that are appropriate based on gender and race and male student-athletes who participate in revenue sports may have developed a stronger athletic identity due to the media attention they receive (Burstyn 2002; Coakley, 2007). The lack of difference in the level of athletic identification between gender and race in this study may be due to the environment of the participants’ university. The university is located in a small town and the campus itself tends to be a close-knit community. All of the sporting events are well attended by the community and garner attention in the school newspaper. This exposure of all sports to the community may cause the equal identification as athlete across gender and race.

The overall mean sum score for the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) was 45.62, with a possible range of scores of 10-70. The AIMS measures the degree to which an individual relates to the role of athlete and a higher score represents a stronger athletic identification (Brewer et al., 1993). The mean score of 45.62 falls within the 65th percentile, indicating that the student-athlete participants had an above average degree of athletic identification. This indicates that student-athletes with exhausted eligibility still
incorporate an athletic identity in their persona, even after the conclusion of their athletic career. The overall mean sum score for the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale was 89.17, with a possible range of scores of 28-140. The Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale was a scale that was developed, based on a review of literature, to assess perceptions on how athletic and non-athlete events affect quality of life following the conclusion of an athletic career and a low score represents difficulty in making the transition. The mean score of 89.17 falls within the 62\textsuperscript{nd} percentile, indicating that the student-athletes have an above average ability to successfully transition from athlete to non-athlete. The ability for the student-athletes to transition out of sport may be related to the support which the student-athletes are provided through the established NCAA CHAMPS/LifeSkills program at the university. The program attempts to enhance the “quality of the student-athlete experience within the university setting” (NCAA, 2005, paragraph 5), and the university in this study has been named a Program of Excellence for preparing student-athletes for life.

While the overall level of a successful athletic transition was above average, no differences were found for athletic transition between race, gender, and type of sport played. The lack of differences between athletic transition and demographic status is contrary to previous studies that found a failure to prepare for life after college athletics may be magnified for African American student-athletes, especially those student-athletes that participate in highly visible sports such as football and basketball (Harrison & Lawrence, 2003). A difference by gender was also found in previous research indicating that due to a lack of professional athletic opportunities, female student-athletes
may place less of an emphasis on athletic identity and spend more time on developing vocational goals for opportunities outside of athletics (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004). A possible reason why no differences were found for athletic transition between races and genders is that all student-athletes at the university are encouraged to participate in the same career development activities. The CHAMPS/LifeSkills program offers career development programming that is marketed to all student-athletes, no matter the sport. Additionally, the high caliber of athletics that are performed at the university have led to professional or National team athletic opportunities for students from all sports. Because of this, student-athletes in sports where there has traditionally been a lack of professional opportunities may see teammates finding success in sport. The professional athletic success of older teammates may create a belief that the recent student-athletes with exhausted eligibility may have the same opportunity once college is over, just as student-athletes in revenue sports have the professional athletic opportunities.

The participants in the interviews discussed that with the conclusion of their athletic career they were now experiencing an “identity crisis” and no longer knew who they were. For the majority of their lives the student-athletes had participated in competitive athletics and the focus had been on their given sport. When an individual’s social context changes, as it does at the conclusion of an athletic career, a strain is placed on that individual’s identity that will require coping skills (Baron & Byrne, 1997). For athletes who excel, such as this study’s student-athletes who participated at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics, athletic identification increases (Grove, Fish, & Eklund, 2003). Participation in sport allowed the student-athletes the opportunity to look at
themselves and gain an understanding of “who they are” (Hensen, et al., 2003), but their entire perception of who they were was tied to athletics. Exhausted eligibility brought the end of an athletic career and thus the end of the perceived athletic identity. The end to the perceived athletic identity, in turn, leads to the identity crisis that the student-athletes experience with the exhaustion of their eligibility.

The student-athletes also discussed how their teammates and coaches were like their “family” and that they no longer felt as though they no longer belonged to that “family” once their eligibility was exhausted. The former student-athletes felt as though their teammates were their entire social network and because they were no longer at daily practice, they felt as though they were no longer part of the group. This loss of social networks is common for transitioning student-athletes as they experience the separation from teammates and coaches (Murphy, 1995; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). The loss of the social network forces the transition from athlete to non-athlete to be more difficult as the student-athletes have lost their support system. When individuals do not receive stable support while experiencing a transition, they are less likely to be successful in coping with the transition (Schlossberg, 1981). The coping strategy of reliance on a strong social support system has also proved to be important for a successful transition from athlete to non-athlete (Koukouris, 1991; Mihovilovic, 1968; Swain, 1991).

Another source of support, the coaches, may have actually stunted the student-athletes developmental growth. While the participants realized that coaching is a business, they also felt as though once their athletic career was over, they were dropped by their coaches and were no longer of importance. During this stage in life, most people
have the freedom to make decisions for their life independently of others (Arnett, 1998) but coaches take on the authoritative role of parents as the coaches set the team rules that the student-athletes have to abide by. This does not allow the student-athletes to become self-sufficient as they are unable to make independent decisions. The implications for the altered authoritative role of the coaches on the student-athletes may be delayed independence. The student-athletes have relied, first on their parents, and now on their coaches to be the authoritative figure in their lives and have not had the opportunity to make independent decisions. Therefore, the student-athletes may be hindered in their ability to successfully navigate the transition from athlete to non-athlete.

Another area of loss that the student-athletes were experiencing as they made the transition from athlete to non-athlete is a loss of structure. In most cases, the former student-athletes had participated in athletics for their entire life and to balance the demands of athletics and academics the student-athletes had lived a life of structure. With the exhaustion of their eligibility came an end to the structured life through sport that the student-athletes had known for the majority of their lives. The student-athletes had not had to learn skills of time management because they were told when they would attend class, practice, and even when they would study and eat. Because the student-athletes had not had to develop time management skills, they had difficulty in making the adjustment to a life that lacked structure. This often caused the student-athletes to procrastinate on school work because there was the idea that they always had later to accomplish the give task. The loss of structure, while difficult initially, may lead to growth for the student-
athletes as they will have to learn time management skills and how to structure their lives in order to be successful in life.

Tied closely to a loss of structure was the final theme of loss, a loss in motivation. The student-athletes discussed physical and mental exhaustion at the conclusion of their collegiate athletic career, which created the lack of motivation to work out and attend class. While the student-athletes expressed a concern to maintain a healthy lifestyle, they lacked the motivation to work out as working out is associated with punishment. The student-athletes were also unmotivated to attend class and complete coursework as sleep became a more important activity to complete in an effort to restore the physical and mental drain caused by the hectic schedule of athletics and academics. A lack of motivation for transitioning student-athletes is common as many former athletes tend to withdraw from student and social roles (Adler & Adler, 1991). This withdrawal from social roles is due to a difficulty in the student-athletes understanding self-concept, such as the loss of athletic identity (Brewer, et al., 1993; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The participants felt as though they could put off the school work or the fitness training because the unstructured life they now were experiencing provided a false sense of time.

The student-athletes also had concerns about the lack of work experience they had and their overall career preparation. Due to the time constraints of athletic participation, student-athletes often do not have the opportunity to participate in work experiences outside of their sport. While the majority of those interviewed did participate in at least one career development workshop during their college careers, the transitioning student-athletes still felt ill-prepared to enter the professional working world due to their lack of
work experience. The difficulties that athletes face upon retirement are due to the failure to formulate adequate career plans following a sports career (Good et al., 1993). Additionally, it can be argued that student-athletes do “work” throughout their four years in college playing their sport and the compensation comes in the form of a scholarship for a college education. Workers in their early 20’s are typically employed in low wage and limited skilled positions as the younger workers are searching for positions that best fit their interests and abilities (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2006). This movement between jobs allows emerging adults to discover interests and abilities as applied to vocational goals; however, student-athletes do not have this opportunity as all of their work experience comes through participation in athletics. Thus, student-athletes are less likely to explore other career or educational options (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). With only 45% of elite athletes engaging in pre-retirement planning (Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2004) this lack of preparation and exploration of vocational interests creates the concern student-athletes have for their future following the conclusion of their athletic careers.

While the student-athletes had negative feelings toward the transition from athlete to non-athlete, one positive outcome was that the student-athletes now felt as though they had the opportunity to participate in “typical” college activities. The exclusive commitment to sport can dominate [the athlete’s] life so much (Petitpas, et al., 1997) that the student-athletes had not had the opportunity to join clubs and organizations or attend athletic events simply as spectators. During the four years of participation in college athletics, student-athletes’ investments in other social roles (e.g., student, friend, fraternity member) are often reduced (McPherson, 1980). The student-athletes cherished
the time spent participating in athletics but are now looking forward to an opportunity for new endeavors on campus that were previously not available due to the concentration and time constraints that athletic practice and competition placed on the student-athletes. The opportunity to become involved in different activities is important to student development as the involvement allows the student the opportunity to develop competence, identity, integrity, and interpersonal relationships (Chickering, 1969). The student-athletes ability to participate in activities outside of athletics will foster an environment of development as well as provide the opportunity for increasing social networks.

**Limitations**

Several factors limit the ability to generalize the results of this study. First, the participant population in the study was generated from one university, and this may have contributed to the lack of statistical significance due to the lack of variability. This study involved a convenient sample of student-athletes with exhausted eligibility from one university that may recruit a specific type of student-athlete, not allowing for variance among student-athletes. While the number of potential participants was small, the individuals who were asked to participate competed at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics and are part of an athletic program that has a tradition of athletic success.

A second limitation of the study was the fact that the sample size was small, with a participant pool of 84 individuals. Because student-athletes have four years to exhaust athletic eligibility, and many take longer than four years to complete their eligibility, in each given year there are a limited number of student-athletes completing an athletic
career at each institution. In this study, all student-athletes who had exhausted their eligibility in the academic year were invited to participate in the study, yet that number was relatively small. The small sample size may have contributed to the lack of statistical significance due to a lack of variability.

A third limitation of the study is potential research bias. The researcher in this study works in the athletics department from which the sample was generated and knew many participants on a personal level. The familiarity with the participants may have led the participants to tell the researcher what they thought she might want to hear for the purposes of the study rather than express true feelings. While the researcher bias may have been a potential limitation, it may also have helped the study in that the researcher has pre-conceived notions of what to expect in the results, which have been challenged based on the findings. These challenged ideas have helped the researcher to look at the transition that the student-athletes are experiences differently, thus reducing the researcher bias.

The final limitation of this study is related to how career development participation was reported. Career development was reported through self-reporting on the demographic survey. Participants were asked for a range of how many career development programs which they had attended during their college career. Within the self-reporting, there were two limitations. First, the student-athletes had to determine what defined career development programming, and this definition may have varied from participant to participant. Further, the participants had to recall all of the programs they had attended over the course of a four or five year period. While self-reporting career
development participation was a limitation, it was the only method for identifying participation due to a lack of official documentation on campus. Student-athletes have the opportunity to participate in career development through the NCAA CHAMPS/LifeSkills Program on campus as well as through the career center, in the classroom, and/or through a residence hall program. With so many opportunities for participation, it would have been difficult to gather a complete record of participation other than through self-reporting.

**Trends and Implications**

The interviews prove that the student-athletes with exhausted eligibility are having difficulty in making the transition from athlete to non-athlete. The NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Program has been designed based on the idea that there are five components to the experiences of participating in intercollegiate athletics: academic excellence, athletics excellence, personal development, community service, and career development (NCAA, 2005). While these five components are in place to create a complete experience for the student-athlete, this study indicates that the student-athletes are finding it difficult to move from athlete to non-athlete. While the statistical analysis did not prove to be significant, when the researcher looked deeper at the student-athletes’ experiences through focused interviews, transitional difficulties were identified. The transitional issues indicate that the NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Programs is not completing its intended mission to “encourage the student-athlete to develop and pursue career and life goals” (NCAA, 2005), thus facilitating the transition. As presented in Chapter IV, the identity of the student-athlete is no longer known, and the student-
athletes have to learn structure and self-motivation. It is suggested that new programming initiatives be implemented for transitioning student-athletes in addition to the programming that is currently taking place on college campuses.

The student-athletes interviewed discussed experiencing a loss of social network and mentors. The student-athletes lived with teammates or other athletes for four years, traveled with teammates across the country, had experienced emotional and physical ups and downs with teammates, and viewed the team as a close circle of friends. With the exhaustion of athletic eligibility, the student-athletes no longer saw teammates or coaches on a regular basis, losing that sense of connection with the group. As a means to reduce the loss of the social network and mentors, the student-athletes with exhausted eligibility should be welcomed to have regular interaction with the team by the coach. If the student-athlete with exhausted eligibility remains on campus, this may mean inviting that individual to team functions or to stop by the office to visit with the coach. For those student-athletes who have begun to move on from the campus experience, it is important for a sense of connection to still exist. Structured alumni functions such as alumni games or alumni dinners can help to facilitate this, as can the coach or athletic administrators calling the recently retired student-athletes to maintain the social connection. The interaction with alumni and athletic administration can also assist the former student-athletes in networking opportunities for potential job placement.

The college years are formative in the identity development of students and for the participants in this study, once the athletic career had concluded, they no longer knew who they were. According to Arnett’s emerging adulthood theory, the period in one’s life
between the ages of 18-25 tends to be a time of self-focus due to a lack of commitment to others (Arnett, 2006). Additionally, emerging adulthood is a time in one’s life when the person does not have to answer to anyone other than him or herself (Arnett, 1998, 2004), thus developing self-sufficiency. The participants in the study expressed the difficulty in losing their coaches as part of their social network and perhaps this is due to the student-athletes relying on their coaches for an authoritative figure. Because student-athletes are members of a team, they do have a commitment to others (teammates and coaches) and there are specific team rules that are in place, which may not allow for self-sufficiency. One recommendation, which would allow for student-athlete’s growth in this area, would be for teams to allow for the student-athletes to determine rules for the team rather than the coaches dictating the rules without the input of the athletes. The ability to assist in formulating team rules may allow for self-sufficiency to develop and for the student-athletes to appreciate the rules and the consequences of said rules. This, in turn, may create a sense of independence for the student-athlete. Additionally, the transition from athlete to non-athlete will be easier as the loss of their mentors may not have the impact that it currently does as they have learned to developed self-sufficiency and do not rely on the authority of their coaches to such a strong degree.

Additionally, the student-athletes need new mentors as a support system in making the transition from athlete to non-athletes. When individuals have psychological resources to aid in their ability to cope with a transition, they have a positive outlook on themselves and a strong set of values (Schlossberg, 1984). One such psychological resource is that of support and the more support individuals receive, the more likely they
will be successful in coping with the transition (Schlossberg, 1981). A program recommendation that may foster new mentor/mentee relationships for providing support while also assisting the retired student-athletes in career discovery is to partner with the Letterwinner Association to develop a mentor program. Participating student-athletes could be paired with a member of the Letterwinner Association who was the same major or has a career similar to the interests of the current student-athlete. The pairing would take place in the final season of competition for the athlete and would allow for the current student-athlete to have someone with whom to talk about the pending transition. The mentor/mentee relationship could continue, with the mentor providing career guidance and assistance as the student-athlete begins a job and career search.

Through the NCAA CHAMPS/ Life Skills Program’s career development piece, the student-athletes are encouraged to begin the career development process early on in the college experience as well as gain practical work experience through part-time jobs and internships, when possible. Some athletic departments choose to hire outside speakers such as Athletes 4 Hire or Competitive Resources Group to speak to current student-athletes about transferrable skills developed as a student-athlete and how to conduct job searches. The student-athletes that were interviewed expressed a concern in their career preparation as they, in most cases, had not had the opportunity to participate in jobs outside of their sport due to the time constraints associated with practice and competition. The college years are important in the personal development and exploration that contribute to the career development process (Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989; Lucas, 1997). Pearson and Petitpas (1990) found that student-athletes are less likely to
explore other career or educational options because of this intense involvement in, and commitment to, athletics. As with studies in the past (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, & Shelton, 2000), the researcher found that student-athletes are not preparing for a future career outside of athletics while in school. Many of the students were concerned that they had not thought about what they would do following college, and they also felt as though their non-athlete peers had a greater opportunity for preparation while in college.

While the athletic departments are seeking to aid the student-athletes, “move-in” (Schlossberg, 1981), to the transition, current programming does not address Schlossberg’s other parts of the transition process: “moving-through” and “moving-out” (Schlossberg). In an effort to move beyond simply telling the student-athletes that there is going to be a transition and preparation is the key to success in making that transition, counseling needs to occur during the transition to help the student-athletes move-through and out of the transition. One method to address this concern would be to invite all of the transitioning student-athletes to meet with a sports psychologist. These meetings could be group sessions initially with individual sessions at the student-athlete’s request. Such sessions would allow the sports psychologist to discuss expectations of the transition as well as help to provide support and strategies as the transition is occurring, two of the 4-S factors that Schlossberg believes are imperative for coping with transition. Research has shown that individuals cope with major loss, or transition, more effectively when they have a confidant who is perceived as helpful (Harvey et al., 1991; Hobfoll, 1988). If the student-athletes do not have a peer, coach, or parent that can serve in the role of
confidant, the sport psychologist can fill this void and assist the student-athletes in coping with the transition.

A final recommendation to aid the student-athletes in making the transition from athlete to non-athlete is for coaches, athletic administrators, academic advisors, and mentors to encourage and facilitate the student-athlete’s participation in as many activities outside of athletics as possible. McPherson (1980) found that student-athlete’s investments in other social roles (e.g., student, friend, fraternity member) are often reduced, leading to an increased athletic identification. While it may prove difficult for some student-athletes to find the time to become involved with different organizations in-season, once athletics has concluded, the outside organization will allow for that student-athlete to still be involved in a social group. Because many of our student-athletes entire social networks are based around athletics, when competitive athletics conclude, the social network is relinquished. The ramification of the loss of social networks is that the student-athlete loses the support system that helps to make the transition successful. If the student-athletes have developed social networks outside of athletics through participation in other activities, they will have developed as extended social support system that can aid in making a successful transition from athlete to non-athlete.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research indicated that the student-athletes with a higher athletic identity had a higher score on the Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale. This is to say that student-athletes with a higher athletic identity had an easier time in making the transition from athlete to non-athlete. While not a significant finding, student-athletes who played non-
revenue sports had a higher athletic identity than those student-athletes who played revenue sports. Future studies may explore why student-athletes from non-revenue sports have a higher athletic identity than student-athletes from revenue sports. It may be that the non-revenue participants are playing the sport more for the love of the game, creating a deeper sense of involvement. Perhaps the student-athletes from the revenue sports are playing as a means of having college paid for (through full or partial scholarships) and for the community status that comes through playing a sport such as football or basketball.

Future studies may look at the reasoning behind why student-athletes with a higher athletic identity have an easier time in making the transition to non-athlete. Because it was the non-revenue sport participants who had a higher athletic identity, the understanding that athletics ends when college ends was present from the moment the student-athlete stepped on-campus. Knowing that there are few professional opportunities in athletics, the non-revenue sport participants may have prepared themselves for the end of athletics throughout the college experience. Conversely, the revenue sport participants may hold on to notions that there is a possibility of continuing to play sports professionally and do not prepare for the transition from athlete to non-athlete throughout the college years.

Another possible area of future research is to look at the degree of athletic involvement to determine if this is a predicting factor for the level of athletic identification and the degree of athletic transition. Student-athletes who have a significant amount of playing time and are on athletic scholarships may have a higher degree of
athletic identity and greater difficulty in making the transition from athlete to non-athlete. It is likely that student-athletes who see significant playing time in their sport spend the NCAA permitted twenty hours a week practicing with their teammates in addition to time spent individually developing athletic skills. This commitment to sport does not allow for the opportunity to participate in activities outside of athletics, leading to an increased athletic identification (McPherson, 1980). The time commitments the student-athletes see as necessary for finding athletic success often cause the student-athletes to compromise their academics, family, and social life in an effort to give everything they have to attain peak performance in their sport. Additionally, student-athletes who see a significant amount of playing time may not participate in career development programming. Due to the level of involvement in athletics, Bann (1985) found that student-athletes who participate in highly competitive athletic programs developed fewer educational and career plans. The lack of vocational goal development for successful student-athletes may be due to the personal expectations that the student-athletes have for a future in professional athletics.

Future research may also look at the differences in athletic identity and athletic transition for student-athletes at different institutions within an athletic conference. Looking at the differences among conference members would allow for a larger population as schools within the same conference typically have similar missions for education. Additionally, future research could also look at the differences among student-athletes at Division I and III institutions. Division III institutions are typically smaller schools than Division I institutions and students who attend smaller schools have
more opportunity to become involved in activities as than student that attend larger schools (Chickering, 1969). This opportunity for an increased participation may allow student-athletes at Division III schools to develop social networks that extend past athletics as well as allowing the student-athletes the chance to experience a wide range of activities thus exploring their interests and abilities. Additionally, Division III athletics is non-scholarship and many of the student-athletes may have to have part-time jobs on top of school and athletics. The development and exploration that takes place during the college years, is a contributing factor in the career development process (Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989; Lucas, 1997) and exploration of potential vocations through part-time jobs helps to develop clear goals for the future.

Future research may also look at the delayed transitions of former student-athletes that may expect to be drafted in to professional athletics but, either are not drafted as expected or are cut from a professional team prior to the start of the season. The student-athletes who remain on campus following the exhaustion of their athletic eligibility have a support system in place through coaches, teammates, and the NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Program. The career development component of the CHAMPS/Life Skills program is to “encourage the student-athlete to develop and pursue career and life goals” (NCAA 2005, paragraph 9). The career development programming that is offered to student-athletes can assist them in thinking about viable options and realizing that while their social identity has been as an athlete for the majority of their life, there are additional groups with whom they have, or could have, membership. The career development program aids student-athletes in making the transition from athlete to non-athlete as the
program allows the student-athletes the opportunity to begin determining vocational goals. For student-athletes who believe they will continue playing their sport professionally, but they are not drafted or are cut from a team prior to the start of the season, the support system for making the transition may no longer be in place. The lack of support and transitional programming may cause the former student-athletes to experience greater difficulty in making the transition from athlete to non-athlete.

Finally, future research could look at the degree of athletic identity in former student-athletes who are three to five years removed from exhausting their eligibility. The student-athlete participants in this study had an above average degree of athletic identification but the participants were surveyed just one month following the conclusion of their athletic careers. It would be interesting to determine if former student-athletes that had been removed from athletics for a number of years still incorporated an athletic identity in their persona. Because athletic identity does strengthen over time (Grove, Fish, & Eklund, 2003) it is likely that the former student-athletes have maintained a sense of athletic identity as they have moved on to pursuits outside of athletics. Researching former student-athletes that are years removed from collegiate athletics may also give a better sense of the transition from athlete to non-athlete as the participants in this study may not have fully “moved-in”, “moved-through”, or “moved-out” (Schlossberg, 1981) of the transition.

**Conclusion**

Intercollegiate student-athletes who are transitioning from athlete to non-athlete do have difficulty in making that transition. Because the student-athlete’s time has been
dominated by athletics and the importance has been placed on athletics, many of the
student-athletes have not had the opportunity to continue identity work and development
beyond the identity of athlete and there may be repercussions for their overall
development. The current NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills model has developed programs
that assist the student-athletes in identifying that a transition is coming and superficially
preparing for that transition, but programming needs to address methods for moving-
though and out of that transition. Schlossberg (1981) stated that the more coping skills
that the individual has, the easier the transition will be. Because these transitions out of
sport are anticipated for the majority of the student-athletes that have exhausted
eligibility, programming can be put into place that will provide a strong support system
and a continuing social network, both of which are imperative for making a successful
transition (Schlossberg).
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Demographic Information Questionnaire

This form is designed to obtain demographic information from the participants of this study. Please fill in the blank or check the appropriate box in response to the following questions.

Year of Birth: 19 _____ I am (check one): ☐ Male ☐ Female

Sport (check all sports you lettered in at Clemson University):

☐ Baseball
☐ Football
☐ Men’s Basketball
☐ Golf
☐ Men’s Soccer
☐ Men’s Swimming & Diving
☐ Men’s Tennis
☐ Men’s Track & Field
☐ Women’s Basketball
☐ Rowing
☐ Women’s Soccer
☐ Women’s Swimming & Diving
☐ Women’s Tennis
☐ Women’s Track & Field
☐ Volleyball

Race (check one):

☐ Caucasian ☐ Asian ☐ Other: ______________________
☐ African American ☐ Hispanic

Were you recruited to participate in the sport you have listed (check one)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you received an athletic scholarship to participate in this sport (check one)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Were you red-shirted during your collegiate athletic experience (check one)?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

If yes, what was the reason for your redshirt year (check all that apply)?

Injury_____  Coach’s Decision_______  Other (list reason)________________

Do you have intentions of competing in your sport at a higher level of competition after college (check one)?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

If you answered yes to the previous question, please indicate what level (check all that apply):

☐ Professional  ☐ Olympic  ☐ Other: ________________________

☐ Semi-Professional

How many career development programs and/or workshops did you attend over the course of your college career (check one)?

☐ 0  ☐ 1-3  ☐ 4-6

☐ 7-9  ☐ 10-12  ☐ 13-15

☐ 16-18  ☐ 19+
Appendix B

Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS)

Instructions: This questionnaire is designed to measure people’s perceptions about their athletic role. There are no right or wrong answers. Use the scale below to respond to each statement. On your answer sheet, fill in the number that best describes how you feel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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1. I consider myself an athlete.
2. I have many goals related to sports.
3. Most of my friends are athletes.
4. Sport is the most important part of my life.
5. I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else.
6. I need to participate in sport to feel good about myself.
7. Other people see me mainly as an athlete.
8. I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport.
9. Sport is the only important thing in my life.
10. I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.
Appendix C

Exhausted Eligibility Transition Scale

Instructions: This survey was designed to gain information on how athletes perceive the completion of their collegiate athletic career. The items below are designed to examine the perceptions you have of exhausting your collegiate athletic eligibility. Please indicate the degree to which the statement accurately reflects your thoughts and feelings at the current time. There are no right or wrong answers so please respond honestly and accurately. The answers you provide to this survey will remain confidential. Your participation is voluntary and you may terminate your participation at any time.

1=Strongly Disagree       2=Disagree       3=Unsure       4=Agree       5=Strongly Agree

I am satisfied with the achievement of the athletic goals I set for my collegiate career.

1 2 3 4 5

I am disappointed that my athletic career will not expend to the professional level.

1 2 3 4 5

I obtain satisfaction from participating in my collegiate sport, and am concerned that I will not achieve the same level of satisfaction when I exhaust my athletic eligibility.

1 2 3 4 5

The goals I set for myself at the beginning of my collegiate career have been met.

1 2 3 4 5

It will be difficult to achieve satisfaction in a pursuit outside of my sport.

1 2 3 4 5

I have thought about what I will do the first 2-3 years of my career following the end of my college athletic career.

1 2 3 4 5

I have decided what my first job will be following graduation.

1 2 3 4 5
I know the steps I will need to take to apply for graduate school or look for a job.  

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The education I received while in college has prepared me for either graduate school or a full-time job.  

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Being an athlete is the most important part of my life.  

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I think that other people value me mostly for my athletic abilities.  

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I feel best about myself when playing my sport.  

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I can easily see myself having an identity other than athlete.  

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I think that it will be difficult for others to see me as something other than as an athlete when I graduate.  

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My athletic career was a major influence on the development of my identity.  

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I am concerned with maintaining my fitness after graduation.  

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I am concerned that it will be hard to maintain a healthy lifestyle when I graduate.  

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I believe that the career skills I have right now will aid in my transition from athlete to non-athlete.  

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My final game of my college career was the hardest day of my life.  

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I have put a lot of time and energy into my sport, but I will be able to move on to other pursuits when my athletic career is over.

I know that it will be difficult to replace this experience because I have invested so much physically and mentally into my sport.

Transitioning out of my sport will be difficult because of how much I personally invested into my athletic career.

I know it will be difficult to find new opportunities to invest my time and energy in following the end of intercollegiate athletics.

I believe that it will be easy for me to develop a new social network when I exhaust my eligibility.

I think it will be difficult for me to get involved in activities not related to sports after I graduate.

Moving away from my college teammates will make it difficult for me to transition out of athletics.

I am involved in a lot of campus activities outside of athletics so I think it will be easy for me to transition away from intercollegiate athletics.
Appendix D

Focused Interview Questions

- How old were you when you began playing your sport?
- Why did you choose to attend Clemson University?
- Did you enjoy your athletic experience at Clemson?
- When you think about yourself, what do you most identify with?
- When other people think about you, how do you think they identify you?
- How did you feel at your last college game?
- What have you been doing since your college athletic experience ended?
- What, if anything, do you miss being a part of the sport?
- Do you still see your teammates? If so, do you still hang out with them?
- Throughout your college experience, did you have a job or internship?
- Have you thought about what you might do following college?
- Did you attend career development programming? If so, how many programs have you attended?
- Do you plan to continue to pursue your sport past the collegiate level? If so, to what degree?
Appendix E

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Validation

Dear Denise and Leslie:

The Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) validated the proposal identified above using Exempt review procedures and a determination was made on September 4, 2007 that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as Exempt from continuing review under Category 2 based on the Federal Regulations. You may begin this study.

Please remember that no change in this research proposal can be initiated without prior review by the IRB. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the IRB immediately. The Principal Investigator is also responsible for maintaining all applicable protocol records (regardless of media type) for at least three (3) years after completion of the study (i.e., copy of validated protocol, raw data, amendments, correspondence, and other pertinent documents). You are requested to notify the Office of Research Compliance (ORC) if your study is completed or terminated.

Attached are documents developed by Clemson University regarding the responsibilities of Principal Investigators and Research Team Members. Please be sure these are distributed to all appropriate parties.

Good Luck with your study and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Please use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

Jane C. Brison
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Clemson, SC 29634-5704
brison@clemson.edu
Office Phone: 864-656-0636
Fax: 864-656-4475
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It was the flying wedge, football’s major offense in 1905, that spurred the formation of the NCAA (n. d.). Retrieved April 14, 2006 from http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/ut/p/kcxml/04_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y_QjzKLN4j3NQDJfJGpvqRqCKO6AKGph4QIUNTL5iYTbcla9Hjm6gqvrd-gH5BbmhoaES5wDEWP84/delta/base64xml/L3dJdyEvUUd3QndNQSEvNEivR82XzBfTFU!?CONTENT_URL=http://www.ncaa.org/about/history.html


