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**Investigating Athletes' Retirement from Sport:
From Decision-Making to Optimal Support
Programmes**

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Abstract

This thesis aimed to extend knowledge of athletes' career transitions through examining athletes' retirement decision-making process and influence of cultural diversity and organisational culture on the process of career transition. The purpose of Study 1 was to identify the current status of knowledge in the study area through providing a systematic review of the athlete career transition studies. The findings provided up to date knowledge in the study area and suggested potential future research directions. Study 2 aimed to understand Korean tennis players' career transition out of sport experiences via longitudinal qualitative research. The results indicated that athletes perceived making the retirement decision was difficult process for them and revealed that participants' experiences were influenced by cultural aspects and sport contexts of Korea. Study 3 focused on exploring the athletes' retirement decision-making process among Korean tennis players. Results showed that athletes' leaving from sport decision-making is a complex and multidimensional process, and the transtheoretical model was helpful in explaining athletes' retirement from sport decision-making. The objective of Study 4 was to explore the processes involved in the development of an athletes' career transition programme. Results revealed that the organisation might have influence on athletes' retirement decision and the quality of career transition. Overall, the findings from the current thesis provide advanced useful knowledge on the athlete career transition process, and such knowledge may assist attempts to enhance athletes' well-being and welfare for during and post-sport life.

Declaration

I declare that I alone composed this thesis and that it embodies the results of my own research. Where appropriate, I have acknowledged the nature and extent of work carried out by others included in the thesis.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. J. ...', written over a horizontal line.

Date

22-May-2012

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the early stages of sport psychology research, investigators' major concern was to enhance excellence in athletic performance (Stambulova, Wrisberg, & Ryba, 2006). Researchers have gradually expanded the study area and have shown interest in athletes' quality of life, including consideration of their career transitions in sport and athletes' life span development (Alfermann, 2000; Murphy, 1995). The career transition of athletes is an important issue because all athletes have to face numerous transitions throughout their athletic careers and eventually retire from their sport. For example, when young athletes enter into organized sports it is considered as initiation of their athletic career (Bloom, 1985). Through the courses of athletic career, they experience various within sport career transitions, such as changes in competitive levels, coaches, and teams. In the final stages of athletic career they confront retirement from their competitive sport (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Because of its importance in athletes' development and subjective well-being, the study area has been received considerable attention from sport psychologists over the past three decades (Bruner, Munroe-Chandler, & Spink, 2008; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000).

In the initial stages of the study of athletes' career transitions, researchers generally focused on the phenomenon of retirement, including the reasons for retirement and the consequences of the sport career end. Since the early 1990s, researchers have focused more on specifying predictors of the quality of athletes' career transitions, such as identity issues (Lally, 2007; Shachar, Brewer, Cornelius, & Petitpas, 2004), the voluntariness of retirement (Butt & Molnar, 2009; McKenna & Thomas, 2007), coping strategies (Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte, 2004; Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon, 1997), and national or cultural factors (Alfermann et al, 2004; Schmidt & Hackfort, 2001; Stambulova, Stephan, & Jäphag, 2007). Investigators also have

broadened the participants studied to include those from various nations, types of sport, age ranges, and competitive levels (Cecić Erpič, Wylleman, & Zupančič, 2004; Warriner & Lavallee, 2008; Wippert & Wippert, 2008), within sport career transitions (Bruner et al., 2008; Hanks & Morris, 2001; Pummell, Harwood, & Lavallee, 2008), as well as examining athletes' close others, such as family and coaches (Bennie & O'Connor, 2004; Herman, 2002; Kane, 1991; Lally & Kerr, 2008), the obligations of sport organisations (Fleuriel & Vincent, 2009; Herman, 2002), and intervention programmes to assist athletes' career transitions (Lavallee, 2005).

As the knowledge base has expanded, researchers have emphasized the need to develop psychological interventions to support athletes in transition (e.g. Fleuriel & Vincent, 2009). As a result, some sport organisations established (e.g. the Australian Institute of Sport, the UK sport) the athlete support programmes. These programmes aim to enhance individuals' life span development, provide opportunities for higher education, develop vocational skills, and assist in athletes' healthy career transitions.

Although the study of athletes' career transitions has expanded rapidly, there is a need for further exploration of the topic. Reasons for leaving sport has been considered as influential factors for the quality of career transition (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). For this reason, researchers (Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouqereau, 2006) have tried to identify reasons for athletes' retirement decision. However, none of the existing models in the study area can provide explanation of athletes' retirement decision-making process. Since the process is closely related to reasons for retirement, examining athletes' decision-making might help to understand their experiences in the early stages of career transition process. Findings (e.g., Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Fernandez et al., 2006) showed that athletes made their retirement decision based on various reasons, including sport related factors (e.g., achievement of sporting goals,

under performance) and non-sport related issues (e.g., graduation, pregnancy). In addition, evidence has been found that athletes' retirement decisions were also influenced by their sport environment and relationships between athletes and sport governing bodies (Fernandez et al., 2006). As Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, and Côte (2009) noted, sport systems and organisational strategies could be related to cultural diversity and organisational culture. Therefore, researchers (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009; Stambulova et al., 2009) have argued that cultural diversity might have influence on athletes' career transition process. Although, Stambulova et al. highlighted possibilities of influence of cultural diversity and organisational strategies in athletes' career transitions, it has not been widely examined in the study area. Findings (Anshell, Williams, & Hodge, 1997; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010) from other areas of sport psychology revealed differences in individuals' coping strategy used and parental influences on sport and academic domains among participants from different cultural backgrounds. In terms of relationships between cultural diversity and decision-making, compared to Westerners, Asians tended to be influenced more by social norms and close others and tried to make compromises during the decision-making process (Briley, Morris, & Simonson, 2000; Mau, 2000).

In regard to organisational culture, several researchers (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Woodman & Hardy, 2001) have investigated influences of organisational culture on athletes' performance enhancement. Similar to other aspects of culture, organisational culture is closely related to values, visions, norms, and beliefs of people from organisations (Hill & Jones, 2006). For this reason, organisational culture might have related to attitude towards supporting athletes' career transitions in organisational level. However, in career transition area, a need of organisational support to assist athletes' career transition is the only issue has been occasionally discussed among

researchers (e.g., Fleuriel & Vincent, 2009), and only few studies (e.g., Fernandez et al., 2006) has suggested influence of organisational culture on the quality of career transition. Since existing literature indicates a need of examining influence of cultural and organisational aspects on athletes' career transitions, examining Korean athletes' retirement experiences might provide evidences of influences of cultural diversity and organisational culture on athletes' decision-making process and the quality of career transition.

This thesis will address several unsolved issues in athletes' career transition study area through seeking answers to; (a) What is the current knowledge of athletes' career transition studies? (b) What steps athletes go through during the retirement decision-making process? (c) What are the influences of cultural and organisational aspects on athletes' retirement decision-making and the quality of career transitions?

1.2 Significance of Research

The current study will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the area of athletes' career transition in several ways.

Firstly, Study 1 will identify the current knowledge of the study area through providing a systematic review of the athletes' career transition out of sport research, focusing on sample characteristics, research designs, and psychological correlates that predict the quality of athletes' career transitions. Based on the findings, it may be possible to suggest potential future research directions.

Secondly, Study 2, which is a longitudinal investigation, aims to understand elite Korean tennis players' career transition experiences over time. The phenomenon of athletes' career transition has been considered a process rather than a singular event. Therefore, results from Study 2 may provide insight into athletes' changes in psychological status and adjustment over a period of time during their career transition.

In addition, in the 30 years investigators have examined career transition in sport, few studies have been done with Asian athletes (three studies have been published in English), and no intervention programme has been reported in any Asian nation. The findings from Study 2 might be helpful in expanding knowledge of athletes' career transitions from different cultural backgrounds and test the generalizability and validity of existing knowledge and theories in other cultural contexts.

Thirdly, the aim of Study 3 is to explore the athletes' retirement decision-making process. It employs the transtheoretical model as a theoretical framework to understand the steps athletes take when deciding whether to retire or not. The study findings may help the understanding of athletes' overall career transition experiences related to their reasons for retirement, influential factors for retirement decision, and psychological experiences of the retirement decision-making process. In addition, if it is possible to identify the psychological processes involved and the demands on athletes during the final stages of their sport careers, it may help to assist practitioners in providing proactive interventions.

Finally, Study 4 focuses on the process of development of an athletes' career transition support programme, including: (a) the views of the people involved in a national organisation during the development of a support programme for athletes' career transitions, and (b) how these people from the organisation address the important psychological factors associated with athletes' career transition when developing support programmes for athletes. Some nations and sport organisations (e.g., Australia, the UK, and Ladies Professional Golf Association) support athletes' career transitions and individual development. However, organisational culture in assisting athletes' career transitions, such as the obligations and perspectives of national governing bodies (NGBs) have not been discussed much in the literature. Results from the study may help

to reveal how organisational culture (views and perspectives of people from NGBs) is related to assist athletes and what kinds of components the programmes contain to assist in dealing with athletes' psychological issues.

Overall, the thesis findings may provide advanced and useful insights into the athletes' career transition process and the development of support programmes for athletes. It is also expected to assist attempts in enhancing athletes' well-being and welfare in their post-sport lives and their individual development.

1.3 Definition of Terms

Athletic identity: The degree to which an individual identifies with the athletic role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993).

Athlete support programme: The programmes designed to develop athletes' social, educational, and vocational skills (Anderson & Morris, 2000).

Coping: Constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Decision-making: Process of mental accounting, including cognitive and psychological determinants of choice based on perceived information of gains and losses (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984).

Identity foreclosure: State of identity which individuals who make commitments to roles without engaging exploratory behaviour (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Oflofsky, 1993).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): IPA is one of the analysis methods for qualitative data. IPA is based on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography and is concerned with the detailed examination of individuals' experiences in particular moments or during significant events (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Pre-retirement planning: Planning ahead for a post-sport life or career while actively competing. Pre-retirement planning may include a variety of activities, such as continuing education, occupational and investment endeavours, and social networking (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

Transferable skills: Skills learned in one area of life that can be used in another area (Murphy, 1995).

Transition: An event or non-event, which results in changes in oneself and ones' world, behaviour, and relationships (Schlossberg, 1981).

Within sport career transitions: Transitions athletes face during their athletic careers (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004).

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

Following this introduction chapter, Chapter 2 provides a review of career transition in sport literature, with a focus on theoretical frameworks and previous study findings.

Chapter 3 contains Study 1, a systematic review of career transition out of sport research. The purpose of Study 1 is to identify the current status of knowledge in the study area by systematically analysing sample characteristics, research designs, and psychological correlates that predict the quality of athletes' career transitions. In addition, the review will suggest future research directions.

Chapter 4 outlines Study 2, which aims to understand Korean tennis players' career transition out of sport experiences by focusing on psychological factors, including athletic identity, perceived influences on retirement from sport, psychological responses, and coping strategies. A total of 23 individual interviews were conducted with five participants over time, and IPA was used to analyse the data.

Chapter 5 presents Study 3, which focuses on exploring the retirement decision-making process among Korean tennis players. Current and former players and coaches were invited to the study and took part in focus groups. A thematic content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. To understand the processes underlying the athletes' stories, the stages of change framework, based on the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984), was employed to draw a process/outcomes matrix.

Chapter 6 presents Study 4, which focuses on exploring specific aspects of the development of an athletes' career transition support programme, including: (a) the views of the people involved in a national organisation during the development of the support programme, and (b) how these people addressed the important psychological factors associated with athletes' career transition when developing the support programme. A case study approach was used in the study, and data were analysed by thematic content analysis.

Chapter 7 contains a general discussion of the entire thesis, including a summary of the study findings, potential practical implications, and future research directions in the area of career transitions in sport.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter aims to provide a review of literature on career transitions in sport and discuss unsolved issues in the study area through critical analysis of existing literature. Initially, the development of athletes' career transition research area will be presented. Subsequently, conceptual models of career transition in sport, which were developed to explain the athlete career transition process, will be discussed. Followed by, a summary of the research findings of athletes' career transition studies and existing intervention programmes for supporting athletes' career transitions will be provided. Finally, gaps in study area and focuses of the current thesis will be highlighted.

2.1.1 The Development of Athletes' Career Transition Research

The early studies in athletes' career transition area had been done by Haerle (1975) and Mihovilovic (1968). Haerle had collected data from 312 former professional baseball players and revealed that more than half of the participants experienced negative emotions regarding their sport career end, and the majority of the respondents considered their post-retirement lives or plans only when their sport career end became imminent. Mihovilovic gained data from 44 Yugoslavian amateur soccer players focused on reasons for career end and the general mechanism of the career transition. The study showed that more than half of the participants terminated their sport career suddenly, and they had negative emotional responses and vocational needs.

Those early studies (Haerle, 1975; Mihovilovic, 1968) in athletes' career transition were conducted without theories or models, because there was an absence of elaborated theoretical frameworks. Therefore, researchers (e.g., Johns, Lindner, & Wolko, 1990; McPherson, 1980; Rosenberg, 1981; Washington, 1981) attempted to grasp the phenomenon of athletes' career transitions by comparing several social gerontological theories (e.g., activity theory, Havighurst & Albrech, 1953;

disengagement theory, Cumming, Dean, Newell, & McCaffrey, 1960; social breakdown theory, Gruenberg & Zusman, 1964). Social gerontological theories of aging (e.g., Atchley, 1976) focus on interactions between society and aging individuals, concentrating on retirees from the general workforce. Each of the theories could explain some aspects of athletes' experiences of career transition. However, researchers (Lavalley, 2000; McPherson, 1980) have argued for the incompatibility between social gerontological theories and athletes' career transition studies, based on differences in the timing of retirement and developmental and vocational needs after retirement occurs.

Some researchers (e.g., Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Lerch, 1984) have suggested applying thanatological models to understand the athletes' career transition process, which are more focused on athletes' emotional reactions and psychological experiences than social gerontological theories. Thanatology is the study of the process of death and dying (Lavalley, 2000). Thanatology studies have not just focused on individuals' psychological death or physical death, but also on social death. In a sport context, researchers have employed three thanatological models to understand athletes' sport career termination, including social death (Kalish, 1966), social awareness (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), and stages of death (Kübler-Ross, 1969). The thanatological models have been supported specifically by studies with participants who have experienced forced retirement from their sport (e.g., Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Lerch, 1984; Zaichkowsky, King, & McCarthy, 2000). Although associations have been found between athletes' sport career termination and the thanatological models, the applicability of the models has been debated among investigators because the models do not explain what causes adjustment difficulties in the athletic career transition process (e.g., Coakley, 1983; Lavalley, 2000). Moreover, athletes' retirement can be considered as a social rebirth and a process, rather than social death or a singular event (e.g.

Koukouris, 1991; Sinclair & Orlick, 1994; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Therefore, some other investigators have tried to employ process-oriented transition models to understand the process of athletes' career transitions.

Transition models (e.g., Schlossberg, 1981) characterise retirement as a process that accompanies changes in individuals' worlds, behaviours, and relationships. Schlossberg's (1981) model of human adaptation to transition is one of the models most employed to investigate the athlete career transition process (e.g., Sinclair & Orlick, 1994; Swain, 1991). The model tries to explain all kinds of transitions that human beings experience during their life spans. The human adaptation to transition model (Schlossberg, 1981) contains three major factors that influence transition outcomes, including individuals' perceptions of the particular transition (e.g., role change, affect, and timing), characteristics of pre-transition and post-transition environments (e.g., internal support system or institutional support), and characteristics of the individual (e.g., psychosocial competence, age, and state of health).

Based on findings from athletic studies, Schlossberg's (1981) model seems to explain athletes' career transition as a process. For example, in the athletic context, perceptions of the particular transition can be considered as reasons for sport career end, timing of retirement, and individuals' perspectives on the consequences of the transition. The characteristics of pre-transition and post-transition environments include athletes' social support networks and institutional supports, such as support from sport organisations, and characteristics of the individual include demographic factors and degree of life skills development. However, other researchers have noted the limitations of Schlossberg's model because of the lack of operational detail associated with the specific components as they relate to sport career transitions (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

To summarise, researchers (e.g., Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Sinclair & Orlick, 1994) in athletes' career transition area attempted to apply various social theories and models to understand athletes' retirement experiences. Some theories and models, such as social gerontological theories and thanatological models could only provide descriptive information for particular aspects of athletes' retirement experiences. Whereas, Schlossberg's (1981) model could explain athletes' transition experiences in general; however, none of those theories or models could provide sport specific explanatory variables for athletes' experiences. Since the 1990s, based on previous findings in the study area, investigators have attempted to develop models that specifically explain athletes' career transitions (e.g., Gordon, 1995; Sinclair & Orlick, 1994; Stambulova, 1994; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004).

2.1.2 Conceptual Models of Career Transition in Sport

Sinclair and Orlick (1994) and Gordon (1995) introduced modified models of Schlossberg's (1981) human adaptation to transition model. The modified transition models were developed to provide more precise perspectives on the athlete career transition process. Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) developed a conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes based on empirical findings to provide better understanding of athletes' retirement experiences. Stambulova (1994) suggested psychological models of the sport career that contain two aspects, including synthetic description (series of essential characteristics of sport career) and analytic description (chronological periods and crisis). More recently, Wylleman and Lavallee (2004) introduced the developmental model, which explains athletes' normative transitions during the whole athletic career, based on individuals' developmental experiences.

Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) model and Wylleman and Lavallee's (2004) model are most widely used models in explain different aspects of athletic careers. For

example, those two models have been used to understand athletes' retirement from sport (Coakley, 2006; Munroe, Albison, & Hall, 1999), and examine within sport career transitions (Pummell, Harwood, & Lavallee, 2008). Findings (e.g., Coakely, 2006; Pummell et al., 2008) indicated that those models provided explanatory variables which helps to predict particular aspect of athletes' career transitions.

2.1.4.1 Conceptual model of adaptation to career transition. In 1994, Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) developed a conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes based on retirement from sport literature, and later in 2006, the model was updated as a conceptual model of adaptation to career transition by Taylor, Ogilvie, and Lavallee (Figure 2.1). The updated model considered athletes' career transitions as a process rather than a singular event, and "retirement" was reworded as a "transition". The model shows three major factors that influence the quality of adaptation to athletic retirement, including causes of career termination, factors related to adaptation to career transition, and available resources for adaptation to career transition. The model also provides potential consequences of athletes' retirement (career transition distress and healthy career transition), and suggests to provide intervention if athletes experience career transition distress.

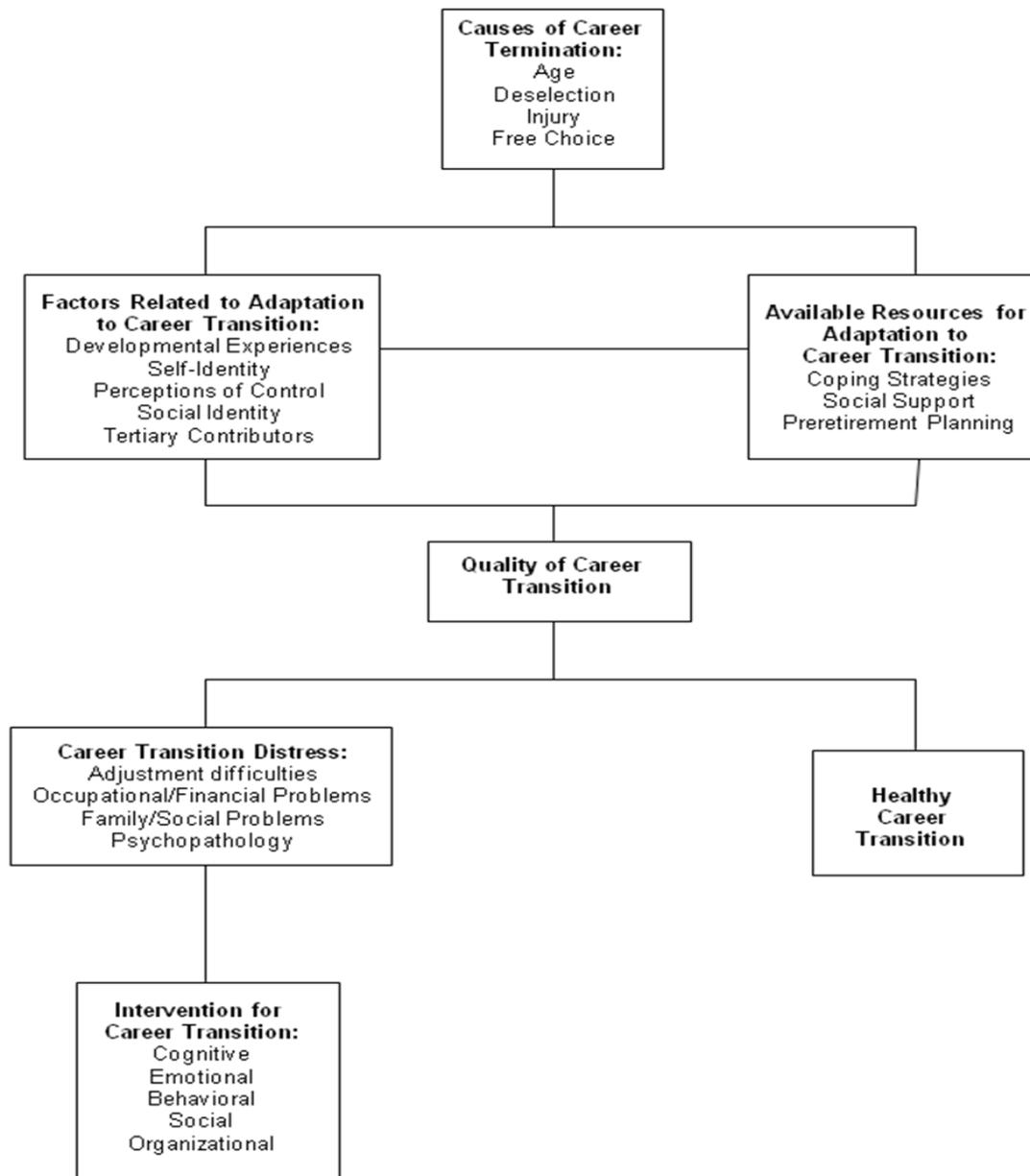


Figure 2. 1. Conceptual model of adaptation to career transition. (Taylor, Ogilvie, & Lavalley, 2006).

The causes of career termination include age, deselection, injury, and free choice. The causes of career termination are considered as one of the significant predictors for the quality of adaptation to career transition. For example, the voluntariness of retirement decision was found as one of the influential factors in athletes' quality of adaptation to athletic retirement in previous studies (e.g., McKenna & Thomas, 2007; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). However, some researchers (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Cecić

Erpič et al., 2004) have noted that athletes' voluntariness of retirement decision could be complex and based on many different reasons, which Taylor and Ogilvie's model does not provide sufficient explanation.

The factors related to adaptation to career transition refer to the degree of individuals' life skills development and their perceptions of the sport career end. These include developmental experiences, self-identity, social identity, perception of control, and tertiary contributors (financial resources and health status). Many athletes experienced transition difficulties because of a lack of life skill development, due to overly devoting themselves to athletic success while competing. Previous studies revealed that athletes who had strong athletic identities during transition out of sport experienced high degrees of adjustment difficulties, and athletic identity tends to weaken after athletes retired from sport (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007). Perception of control indicates the degree of athletes' consciousness awareness in control over their retirement decision, which is related to the reason for sport career end. The findings showed that absence of control over their retirement (e.g., deselection or injury) related to negative emotional experiences during the retirement process and caused transition difficulties (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; McKenna & Thomas, 2007). Tertiary contributors include various personal, social, and environmental factors. Financial issues are among the main concerns for athletes during their retirement (e.g., Lotysz & Short, 2004; Menkenhorst & Van Den Berg, 1997). Poor physical condition and health problems have also been reported as sources of transition difficulties among retiring athletes, especially those who experienced major injuries (e.g., Hanks & Morris, 2001; Stambulova, 2001).

Available resources for adaptation to career transition include athletes' coping resources and support networks during the retirement process, such as coping strategies,

social support, and preretirement planning. Research revealed that social support from significant others, in terms of both psychological and instrumental support, play an important role in athletes' career transitions (e.g., Leung, Carre, & Fu, 2005; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008). Studies showed that athletes tried searching for social support from close others during the retirement process, and athletes expressed that support from family and friends had helped them to ease transition difficulties (e.g., Young, Pearce, Kane, & Pain 2006). Pre-retirement planning is one of the significant influential factors in the quality of athletes' transitions because pre-retirement planning includes various activities, such as having other interests during the athletic career and developing life skills (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004). According to findings from North and Lavalley (2004), athletes may have two different plans for their career transitions, including short-term plans and long-term plans. This result might suggest a need of identifying differences in those two plans, in terms of time frames for the planning and differences in focuses of the plans.

Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) and Taylor et al.'s (2006) models also show the positive and negative consequences of athletes' retirement. The models contain possible crises athletes may face, including psychopathology, substance abuse, occupational/financial problems, and family/social problems. The previous studies showed that athletes' retirement from sport can be either a moderate change or not a difficult experience for them (e.g., Alfermann, 1995; Johns et al., 1990), but there were also athletes who perceived their sport career end as a traumatic experience (e.g., Lally, 2007; McKenna & Thomas, 2007).

Finally, the model suggests several intervention strategies for assisting in athletes' cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social issues, including organisational support. Taylor et al. (2006) noted that there is a need to help athletes to have balanced identity

and organisational support. In addition, the model suggests that it might be helpful for practitioners to use various traditional therapeutic approaches to support athletes, including cognitive restructuring (Garfield & Bergin, 1978), stress management (Meichenbaum & Jaremko, 1983), and emotional expression (Yalom, 1980). Although, Taylor et al.'s model suggests intervention strategies, the strategy is reactive. Nowadays, researchers (Gilmore, 2008; Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004) have emphasized a need of assisting athletes with proactive interventions, because of importance of pre-transition planning and life skills development. However, since there is no information related to actual timing of initiation of the retirement process, there is no accurate suggestion for appropriate timing of providing proactive interventions.

In general, Taylor and Ogilvie's model (1994) tended to provide exploratory variables, which related to the quality of athletes' post-sport adjustment process. Coakley (2006) and Munroe et al., (1999) employed Taylor and Ogilvie's model to understand the process of athletes' retirement from sport. The findings supported the model, in terms of the importance of individual development, coping strategies, and reasons for sport career end in the quality of athletes' adjustment to post-sport lives.

2.1.4.2 Developmental model. Wylleman and Lavallee (2004) introduced the developmental model based on previous studies in both within sport career transitions and retirement from sport (Figure 2.5). The authors note that there are two types of transitions, which are normative and non-normative. Normative transition refers to the transition that can be predictable and anticipated (Schlossberg, 1981), related to biological, social, and emotional changes through aging (Baltes, 1987), and influenced by social context (Wapner & Craig-Bay, 1992). The developmental model (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) has a developmental and holistic perspective on athletes' normative transitions during their athletic careers from the initiation to discontinuation stages. The

model contains four layers that are related to athletes' life span development, including athletic, psychological, psychosocial, and academic and vocational levels.

Athletic level deals with factors related to athletes' transitions based on changes in their competitive levels, and the changes are determined by organisational characteristics. The athletic level has four different stages that can occur during athletes' within sport career transitions, which are Bloom's (1985) three stages of talent development (i.e., initiation, development, and mastery or perfection) and the discontinuation stage. The initiation stage indicates the period when young athletes enter their sport, the developmental stage refers to the time when athletes dedicate time and effort to their sport to develop their sporting skills, the mastery stage is the period when athletes reach their highest performance and the discontinuation stage refers to transition out of competitive sport.

AGE	10	15	20	25	30	35
Athletic Level	Initiation	Development	Mastery		Discontinuation	
Psychological Level	Childhood	Adolescent	Adulthood			
Psychosocial Level	Parents Siblings Peers	Peers Coach Parents		Partner Coach	Family (Coach)	
Academic Vocational Level	Primary education	Secondary education	Higher education	Vocational training Professional occupation		

Note. A dotted line indicates that the age at which the transition occurs is an approximation.

Figure 2. 2. A developmental perspective on transitions faced by athletes at athletic, individual, psychosocial, and academic/vocational levels (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004).

The psychological level in the model is based on conceptual frameworks of individuals' life span development (e.g., Erikson, 1950; Havighurst, 1973; Piaget, 1971) and contains major developmental stages (i.e., childhood, adolescence, and adulthood). Childhood indicates young athletes' readiness for structured sport competition, including motivational viewpoints (e.g., degree of interest in and attention on participating in the sport) and cognitive viewpoints (e.g., capacity for understanding rules, responsibilities, relationships, and causes of performance outcomes). Adolescence and adulthood refer to the period of time when athletes are facing various life skill developments, such as social skills and self-identity. In this period of time, athletes build new or mature relationships with peers and become emotionally independent from parents. The authors argued that athletes' self-identity development in the adolescent stage is crucial, and their identities can be both positively and negatively influenced depending on the degree of their commitment to their sport and other life skills development.

The psychosocial level presents athletes' development of social networks, including interaction with their surroundings and changes in the roles of significant others through the athletic career. The model shows that parents, siblings, peers, and coaches are the most influential others for young athletes, and in the latter stages of an athletic career (adulthood), partners, families, and coaches play important roles in athletes' social networks.

The academic and vocational level describes athletes' educational and occupational development during participation in competitive sport and contains primary education, secondary education, higher education, and vocational training and professional occupation. In the early stages, athletes are mostly in the initiation stage. Later, when athletes are in primary education and in the early adolescent stages, they

generally experience transition into secondary education. The transition possibly accompanies changes in their sport teams, and social networks, so athletes need to deal with these changes. Several studies reveal that athletes overlook their education during their athletic careers, resulting in absence from class and causing delays in academic skills development (e.g., De Knop, Wylleman, Van Houcke, & Bollaert, 1999; Stronach & Adair, 2010). Finally, those athletes who transition out of a sport career, whether it is the end of a collegiate sport career or a career at an international level, have to step into the vocational level and need to have vocational training or learn a professional occupation. Alfermann, (2000) suggested that academic progress is related to different education policies in different nations, and athletes' vocational opportunities are associated with sport structure, but eventually, most athletes need to find post-sport careers when they face termination of their sport careers.

As the developmental model provides a conceptual perspective on athletes' whole sport career, Bruner et al. (2008) tried to understand a within sport career transition through using two layers (i.e., athletic level and psychosocial level) from the developmental model, and findings suggested that the model provides a fruitful conceptual framework to understand young athletes' within sport career transition experiences.

In summary, since the 1990s, researchers have developed several conceptual models of career transition in sport to provide an explanation of athletes' career transition process. The models basically focus on individual (e.g., degree of life skill development and demographical differences) and environmental (e.g., support resources and type of transition) factors that relate to athletes' career transitions. Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) model is widely used in the study area to explain variables related to athletes' post-sport life adjustment. Whereas, Wylleman and Lavallee's (2004) model

provides explanation regarding overall athletic career development focusing on developmental perspectives. However, models in athletes' career transition do not contain exploration related to particular stages of athletes' career transition process, such as the final stages of athletic careers or retirement decision-making process. Research findings in the study area which is presented below (2.2), indicated that reasons for leaving sport is closely related to the quality of post-sport life adjustment, but there is no sufficient discussion related to process between athletes' retirement decision-making and the post-sport life adjustment. Therefore, examining athletes' retirement decision-making process might help understand athletes' overall career transition process. This will be discussed furtherer in section 2.5 and 2.6.

2.2 Research Findings in Athletes' Retirement from Sport

Since Mihovilovic (1968) conducted the first study in examining athletes' retirement, investigators have explored athletes' retirement from sport for the past 30 years. Based on early findings (Haerle, 1975; Mihovilovic, 1968; Rynorl, 1981), researchers have attempted to specify sources of athletes' healthy career transitions, such as identity issues (e.g., Lally, 2007; Lavallee et al., 1997; Shachar et al., 2004), voluntariness of the retirement decision (e.g., Drahotka & Eitzen, 1998; Lynch, 2006), and coping strategies (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Stephan, Bilard, Ninot, & Delignières, 2003b). The investigators have also broadened the range of participants to include worldwide nations, various types of sport, ages, and competitive levels, and athletes' close others, such as family and people from the sporting field (e.g., Bennie, & O'Connor, 2004; Herman, 2002; Kane, 1991; Lally & Kerr, 2008).

In athlete career transition literature, findings indicate that some athletes experience problematic transition, but others have moderate or no difficulties during the transition process. Researchers (e.g., Sinclair & Orlick, 1994; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994)

have suggested three predictors of the quality of athletes' transitions, including reasons for sport career end, factors related to the quality of career transition, and coping resources.

2.2.1 Consequences of Retirement

Athletes' negative psychological and emotional responses to their retirement from sport have been reported in many studies, including identity crisis, feelings of loss, fear of an uncertain future, isolation, and frustration (e.g., Allison & Meyer, 1988; Kerr & Dacys, 2000; Lally, 2007; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007). The findings showed that athletes also experienced adjustment difficulties to post-sport lives or careers because retirement from sport accompanies critical life changes (e.g., lifestyle, career changes, and loss of travelling). Researchers emphasized that retirement from sport and adjustment to post-sport life needs to be coped with over time (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Some of the studies reported negative outcomes of athletes' retirement in social, behavioural, and occupational areas, including loss of social or financial status, maladaptive reactions (e.g., smoking, drug abuse, alcohol dependence), and difficulties in finding jobs (e.g., Fleuriel & Vincent, 2009; Lavalley et al., 1996; Munroe et al., 1999; Winterstein, Brandão, Pinheiro, Agresta, Akel, & Martini, 2001).

Some studies revealed that not all athletes experienced difficulties during their adjustment to post-sport life, and some athletes perceived their sport career end as a positive event (e.g., Alfermann, 1995; Johns et al., 1990). Alfermann (1995) concluded that German retired athletes' post-sport life adjustment experiences were neither positive nor negative, and some of the participants from Johns et al.'s (1990) study reported that they considered retirement from sport as a positive event for them, because they could enjoy life outside sport and spend more time with friends.

Investigators have tried to find predictors of the consequences of athletes' career transition. Research findings revealed various responses among athletes to their adjustment to post-sport life based on individual (e.g., degree of athletic identity, coping skills) and environmental (e.g., reasons for retirement, post-sport career opportunities, and support networks) factors. Those factors can be divided into reasons for sport career end, factors related to the quality of career transition, and coping resources.

2.2.2 Reasons for Sport Career End

Previous literature has showed that athletes' most common reasons for sport career end are injuries, deselection, and personal choice (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994), but the causes of retirement for athletes are complex and multidimensional (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshn, 2000). Recently, Cecić Erpič et al. (2004) defined influential factors in athletes' retirement as athletic (e.g., achievement of athletic goals, injuries) and non-athletic (e.g., new job, marriage, and illness) factors. Fernandez et al., (2006) also examined French athletes' reasons for sport career end based on anti-pull (overall risk and cost aspects relating to the post-sport life), pull (positive aspects of the post-career life), anti-push (attachment to the sport career), and push (negative considerations of the athletes' present life) factors. Also, researchers (e.g., Lavalley, 2000; Wylleman et al., 2004) viewed athletes' reasons for sport career end as falling into two major categories based on control over the retirement decision, which are voluntary reasons (self-choice) and involuntary reasons (e.g., injuries, deselection).

Voluntary reasons include athletic and non-athletic reasons, such as decrease in performance, loss of passion for competition, accomplishment of sporting goals, pursuing goals outside sport career, and critical life changes (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Young et al., 2006). Young et al. (2006) reported that their participants' reasons for retirement from sport were diverse, and some of them had

lost passion for sport, felt the limitations of their performance abilities or felt the need to pursue life outside their sport and career. Alfermann et al. (2004) revealed that some of the German retired athletes attributed their reasons for retirement from sport as job related issues (e.g., finishing education, getting a job). Cecić Erpič et al. (2004) showed that some of the athletes retired because of significant life changes, including graduation, starting a new career or becoming a parent.

Involuntary reasons, including injury and deselection, cause unexpected abrupt retirement for athletes. These reasons are related to underperformance because injury and a decrease in physical capacity cause performance detriments, and underperformance can be a reason for being cut from the team (Lavalley, 2000).

Since researchers became interested in the influence of the voluntariness of the retirement decision on the quality of adjustment to post-sport life, the majority of findings have indicated that forced and abrupt retirement cause transition difficulties among athletes. For example, athletes who experienced abrupt retirement had psychological, social, and vocational difficulties through the process because of the lack of preparation for post-sport life (e.g., McKenna & Thomas, 2007; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008). Involuntary reasons are also associated with a lack of control over the decision-making process because forced retirement is uncontrollable and happens because of external influences, such as being cut from their teams. Some athletes attributed their career transition difficulties to a lack of control over the retirement decision (e.g., Fortunato & Marchant, 1999).

2.2.3 Factors Related to the Quality of Career Transition

Researchers (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Gordon, 1995) have tried to identify factors related to the quality of career transition, including individuals' degree of life skills development, previous experiences, self-identity, demographics, and sport career

achievement. Findings suggested that the balance in athletes' lifestyles, such as the balance between sporting and non-sporting activities, tends to relate to individual development. For example, degree of athletic identity and life skills development influence on the quality of adjustment to post-sport life, in terms of identity reformation and acquiring higher educational achievement (e.g., Harrison & Lawrence, 2003, 2004; Lally, 2007; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Williams, 1991). Several researchers (e.g., Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1995; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990) have stated that athletes are susceptible to delays in life skills development because of narrowly focused life styles, and a lack of life skills development can be the source of career transition difficulties. Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) also reported that five out of seven participants from their study had experienced transition difficulties, and athletes who had balanced lifestyles when competing had easier transitions to post-sport life.

Athletic identity issues have been examined for the past 20 years. Athletic identity refers to individuals' self-identity in the sport domain and is closely related to athletes' roles, perceived values, and social networks during their athletic careers (Brewer et al., 1993). The findings in the study area revealed that athletes who had strong athletic identities experienced a higher degree of career transition difficulties and identity crisis during the career transition process, because of their narrowly focused lifestyles and identity development. For example, Lally (2007) revealed that the athletes who had a higher degree of athletic identity experienced more negative emotions, including feelings of loss, isolation, and fears of an uncertain future, and took a longer time to adjust to post-sport life than those who had a more balanced identity.

Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) suggested that individuals' demographic differences may influence the quality of their adjustment to post-sport life, including gender, education, finances, marital status, and competitive levels. The findings indicate that

education, finances, and marital status had positive correlations with the quality of athletes' adjustment to post-sport life (e.g., Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Fernandez et al., 2006; Swain, 1991; Menkehorst & Van Den Berg, 1997). However, other demographic aspects (e.g., age, gender, and type of sport) have not shown clear associations with the quality of athletes' adjustment to post-sport life (e.g., Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Fernandez et al., 2006).

Some researchers (e.g., Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993) reported that sport career achievement was positively related to the quality of athletes' adjustment to post-sport life. Cecić Erpič et al. (2004) revealed that athletes who achieved their sporting goals showed a more balanced self-identity, higher self-esteem, global self-concept, and less occupational difficulties compared to those who had achieved fewer than expected sporting goals. Similarly, the degree of achievement of sporting goals was positively related to post-sport life satisfaction among retired athletes (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993).

2.2.4 Coping Resources

Coping is defined as cognitive and behavioural efforts that individuals make to deal with external and internal demands and conflicts (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Coping resources include individuals' abilities in dealing with stress or difficulties, support networks, and pre-retirement planning (Lavalley, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Lazarus and Folkman, (1984) noted that individuals' ability to use effective coping strategies is related to reducing difficulties and distress when people face problems. Social support and pre-retirement planning have also been found as influential factors in the process of athletic career transition (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Stambulova et al., 2007).

Researchers have examined frequently used coping strategies among athletes who were in the retirement process and found that the most frequently employed coping strategies are seeking social support (e.g., Grove et al., 1997; Stephan et al., 2003b), avoidance (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Lally, 2007), acceptance (Alfermann et al., 2004; Stambulova, 2001), and finding other interests (e.g., Butt & Molnar, 2009; Douglas & Carless, 2009). The degree of social support (e.g., Stephan et al., 2003b) and finding other interests (e.g., Butt & Molnar, 2009; Douglas & Carless, 2009) were the only items that showed positive associations with the quality of athletes' adjustment to post-sport life. Social support includes all kinds of support that athletes get from other people in various forms, such as emotional and instrumental support. Finding other interests or roles tended to have a positive relationship with athletes' identity shift after retirement because gaining new roles and interests helped athletes to focus on their new career or life (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007).

The majority of studies, which dealt with pre-retirement planning, indicated a positive association between pre-retirement planning and the quality of athletes' adjustment to post-sport life (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008; Young et al., 2006). Studies revealed that athletes who had pre-retirement plans, including overall life plans, post-sport career plans, and financial plans, experienced healthier career transitions than who did not have pre-retirement plans (e.g., Warriner & Lavalley, 2008; Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Young et al., 2006).

To summarise, athletes' retirement from sport has been examined for the past 30 years. In the early stages researchers focused on the consequences of athletes' sport career end, and based on early findings, investigators have broadened their interests to include influential predictors of the quality of athletes' adaptation to post-sport life.

Since the 1990s, a number of researchers have emphasized the need for intervention programmes to support the process of athletic career transition (e.g., Baillie & Danish, 1992; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Several intervention strategies and athletes' support programmes, which are provided by several organisations around the world, will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Interventions in Athletes' Career Transitions

Since the 1990s, as a result of a growing body of research on athletes' retirement from sport, investigators (e.g., Grove, Lavalley, Gordon, & Harvey, 1998; Lavalley, 2005; Perna, Zaichkowsky, & Bocknek, 1996; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) have suggested numerous intervention approaches to support athletes' healthy career transitions. The approaches include the Life Development Intervention (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1992), mentoring (Lavalley, Park, & Tod, 2010), account-making (Harvey, Weber, & Orbuch, 1990), and traditional therapeutic approaches (e.g., Meichenbaum & Deffenbacher, 1988; Yalom, 1980). In addition, several national governing bodies and international sports organisations have provided various kinds of athlete support programmes (Table 2.1, p. 39).

2.3.1 Life Development Intervention

The Life Development Intervention (LDI) refers to a framework for the practice of sport psychology based on individuals' life span development (Danish et al., 1995). Lavalley (2005) revealed the efficacy of such intervention programmes by providing several intervention strategies, based on the LDI model, to retired British athletes. The results showed the positive effects of the intervention programme on assisting athletes' career transition.

The major perspective of LDI is psycho-educational development that emphasizes continuity in growth and changes in one's life and sees individual development as a life span process. In addition, from the LDI perspective, individuals' life changes are inevitable, and the changes can disrupt one's daily routine or relationships, can be sources of stress, and can be opportunities to grow (Danish et al., 1992, 1995). Danish et al. (1992) labelled each major change that individuals confront during their lives as a "critical life event". The event can occur to individuals either with preparation and expectation, which is called an "on time event", or in an unplanned and unpredictable way, which is termed an "off time event". If some event happens on time, individuals can get more support during the transition period, whereas by contrast, off time events usually accompany coping difficulties (Danish et al., 1992).

During their athletic careers, athletes also confront various critical life events, including within sport career transitions, annual selection processes, injuries, and retirement from their sport. For some athletes, especially those who put a huge amount of effort and time into athletic success, retirement from sport tends to be a critical life event because leaving sport accompanies negative experiences, such as feelings of loss, identity crisis, loss of attention, loss of everyday training, and changes in social networks (e.g. Grove et al., 1997; Lally, 2007).

Some athletes face the end of their career as an "off time event" because of injuries or deselection, with no time for preparation for retirement, or intention to do so (Lavalley, Grove, & Gordon, 1997; Meckenna & Thomas, 2007). Forced or abrupt retirement is a typical off time event and is negatively related to the quality of athletes' post-sport life adjustment because of the lack of support and preparation (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). The LDI model suggests several strategies (i.e., enhancement,

supportive, and counselling strategies) that can be applied to the critical life event process.

Lavallee (2005) employed LDI, which can be used during and after event occurrence. The study was done with 71 retired British male professional soccer players, with 32 of the participants recruited as an intervention group and 39 participants as a control group. The intervention group was provided with three strategies in one-on-one intervention programmes. The interventions contained a supportive strategy (intervention which provides during the transition; e.g., education, building support networks), a counselling strategy (intervention which provides after the transition; e.g., emotional support, developing coping skills), and goal setting based on the psycho-educational developmental model. The interventions were practiced for 4 months, with approximately 50 minutes per session, and an average of three sessions for each participant were provided by the researchers. To understand individuals' current status, participants were asked to complete the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI; Myers & McCaulley, 1985) and Strong Interest Inventory (SII; Consulting Psychologist Press, 1985) during the sessions. To test the efficacy of intervention, both treatment and control groups completed two questionnaires, the British Athletes Lifestyle Assessment Needs in Career and Education scale (BALANCE; Lavallee & Wylleman, 1999) and the Transition Coping Questionnaire (TCQ; Schlossberg, 1993), in the pre- and post-intervention period. Results indicated that for pre- and post-intervention tests on the BALANCE scale, there were no significant differences between both groups in adjustment experiences, which were reported as being of average difficulty. In contrast, TCQ scores showed significant differences in mean total score between the two groups. Across the four subscales for both groups at pre-test, they were classified as "moderate". Whereas the post-intervention TCQ test indicated that the intervention group scored

significantly higher in all four subordinate concepts (i.e., situation, self, support, and coping strategies) compared to the control group, who remained moderate in post-test. The researcher attributed the results to the Life Development Interventions. For example, the treatment might have assisted better understanding of the athletes themselves and broadened their social identity and roles, or elevated their self-confidence and self-worth, which were considered as an essential assistance in supporting athletes' career transitions (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). In addition, learning new skills to cope with their current situations likely had impacted on boosting the participants' ability to cope with retirement and had led them to have positive views of their sports career end. Although the intervention did not change or treat any athletes' social support networks, the intervention group showed higher support scores, and the author assumed that intervention might have increased their strategies or ways of using their existing support networks and provided additional social support. Overall, Lavalley's (2005) findings indicate significant efficacy of the Life Development Intervention in building coping ability and positive perspectives during athletes' career transitions and strongly supported the need for development the of interventions for the athlete career transition processes. Furthermore, the author also emphasizes a need for more evidence throughout research in various areas, such as effectiveness of intervention in behavioural, cognitive, emotional, and social activities among athletes.

2.3.2 Mentoring

Researchers have suggested mentoring as a one of the possible assistance methods for athletes' career transition processes and have attempted to identify the beneficial effects of mentoring (e.g. Barners, 2002; Perna et al., 1996; Taylor & Lavalley, 2010). The concept of mentoring has been referred to as a process of support, counselling, and

guidance whereby a more experienced individual helps a protégé in some specified development (Kram, 1992).

In athlete career transition processes, athletes often see their coaches as mentors and believe that it is valuable to be advised by coaches, because coaches have often gone through the same experiences (e.g. McKnight, 1996; Perna et al., 1996). Additionally, some studies have reported the positive effectiveness of mentoring during career transition in sport settings (e.g. Cockerill, & Edge, 1998; Perna et al., 1996). Perna et al. (1996) have assessed the level of mentoring between athlete groups and non-athlete groups at the end of college careers, and discovered that student athletes had greater mentoring than non-athletes when mentoring was non-empirically evaluated. The student athletes who had more mentoring during the process of athletic career transition showed higher vocational mentoring scores. Similarly, Cockerill and Edge (1998) examined how mentoring influences the process of athletic career transition by assessing four Olympic-level retired athletes' mentoring scores and personal discrepancies, which showed a gap between ideal self and actual self. The results revealed that participants, who had satisfied with mentoring, perceived greater support and healthier emotional adjustment than who had limited mentoring support.

Overall, although the studies showed little association or presented no clear positive influence of mentoring, the researchers noted a high degree of athlete demand for a mentoring system and the practical implications for the use of mentoring in athletes' career transition adjustment.

2.3.3 Account-making

The account-making model emphasizes the importance of the role of the “working through” process during changes in identity, including searching for a feeling of closure, expressing emotions, confiding stories, and getting empathy from others (Grove et al.,

1998). Studies showed evidence for the positive influence of confiding in others (e.g. Barners, 2002; Grove et al., 1998; Lavallee et al., 1997; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). The benefits of confiding activities can be discussed based on the account-making model (Harvey et al., 1990), which is a revision model of Horowitz's (1986) model. The account-making model shows how individuals cope with traumatic life events via working-through processes and the model emphasizes that there are certain stages to dealing with individuals' stress reactions. According to Harvey et al. (1990), account-making activity helps to reduce stress and helps to build positive psychological adaptation and enhance mental health.

Grove et al. (1998) suggest that the process of athletic career transition can be explained by the account-making model, and the account-making model can be an appropriate approach to supporting athletes' career transition adjustment. According to Grove et al., athletes' career transition out of sport can be seen as a breaking through process that is associated with searching for closure regarding their sport careers and identity changes. The findings showed that the participant's processes of adjustment to post-sport life were similar to the account-making model (Harvey et al., 1990), including outcry, denial, working through, and identity changes.

Another study conducted by Lavallee et al. (1997) revealed the amount of account-making to be related to a decrease in athletic identity, and the degree of perceived empathy from a confidant was associated with the level of overall success in coping with retirement. In addition, Barners (2002) examined retirement experiences of female college team sport athletes and revealed that all 10 participants involved in the study expressed positive reactions to talking about their sport careers and transition process through participating in the study, and three of the participants said that the interview itself was therapeutic for them.

2.3.4 Traditional Therapeutic Approaches

Traditional therapeutic approaches have been employed in sport psychology to reduce competitive anxiety, to overcome injuries, and to boost peak performance. Researchers (e.g., Gordon & Lavalley, 2004; Wolff & Lester, 1989) suggested that a number of therapeutic techniques can be applied to assist athlete career transition, as well as promoting performance excellence, including existential psychotherapy (May & Yalom, 2000), rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT; Ellis, 2000), and stress-inoculation therapy (Meichenbaum & Deffenbacher, 1988).

Existential psychotherapy (e.g., Yalom, 1980; May & Yalom, 2000) is based on existential philosophy, which approaches individuals' ontological experiences and provides counselling focused on their life values and the timing of the present event. Studies showed that not all, but some athletes faced the concerns that Yalom (1980) identified, including feelings of death, fear of freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness during the career transition out of sport (e.g. Allison & Meyer, 1988; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Lavalley et al., 2000; Wheeler, Malone, VanVlack, Nelson, & Steadward, 1996). Taylor and Lavalley (2010) assume that an existential philosophical approach can assist practitioners to understand individuals' unique development and career transition processes, and expressing emotion helps to reduce athletes' negative emotions during their retirement.

Wolff and Lester (1989) suggested that cognitive therapy (CT; Beck, 1991; Clark & Beck, 2010) might be suitable to help athletes' negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, depression) based on negative bias, including negative views of self, world, and future, which potentially can happen during the transition process. The therapy aims to correct faulty information processing and can support the decrease of negative cognitions of sport career end and build positive perspectives on post-sport life. Similarly, Rational

Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT; Ellis, 2000), which tries to find individuals' basic values and rational or healthy behaviour, can be an effective technique for athletes who show denial of sport career end and a loss of a rational view of their situations to get back some insight into their current experiences and status.

Meichenbaum and Deffenbacher (1988) recommend stress-inoculation therapy, which includes acceptance, cognitive restructuring, and relaxation, because of its utility in decreasing distress and building coping ability through training. Investigators (e.g., Gordon & Lavalley, 2004) have also recommended the therapy to encourage retired athletes who consider their sport career termination as a problematic event to perceive the problem as solvable and focus on what is changeable rather than past events (e.g., forced retirement).

To summarise, researchers have suggested several intervention strategies for supporting athletes' career transition processes, including LDI, account-making, mentoring, and traditional therapeutic approaches. Although there is little evidence for the effectiveness of providing interventions in athlete retirement, most findings indicated that providing intervention programmes for athletes during their career transition has a positive influence on them. In addition, researchers (e.g., Wylleman et al., 2004) suggested that providing intervention programmes should be part of the whole career transitional process, including the pre-retirement stages and post-sport life adjustment period, and the intervention can be applied using more than one method at the same time.

2.4 Career Transition Assistance Programmes

Thomas and Ermler (1988) emphasized institutional obligations in supporting the process of athletic career transition. They also argued a need of institutional assistance to support elite athletes because of possible delays in individual life skills development

and the negative impact of the consequences of retirement from sport. Thomas and Ermler suggested that institutions should treat athletes as human beings rather than just athletic people, and career transition assistance programmes should aim for athletes' success as human beings, rather than aiming for the success of the programme. Since the 1990s, to assist athletes' career transitions, investigators have developed athlete support programmes, and several career transition intervention programmes have been provided by governing bodies or sport organisations around the world (Anderson & Morris, 2000).

Researchers (e.g., Anderson & Morris, 2000; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990) stated that being a high level athlete for more than 10 to 20 years can cause unbalanced individual development. Because the majority of elite athletes devote themselves only to sporting goals, they might experience the development of a high degree of athletic identity, a lack of educational accomplishment, and a lack of vocational training. Some of them sacrifice many other opportunities, including education and roles outside sport. The previous research findings on athletes' life span development in career transition in sport indicate a positive relationship between the degree of individual development and the quality of adjustment to post-sport life (e.g., Lavalley et al., 1996; Muscat, 2010; Stronach & Adair, 2010). Based on these findings, programmes were designed to develop individuals' various life skills, including social, educational, and vocational skills.

According to Gordon, Lavalley, and Grove (2006), these programmes are provided by five major sources, including national sport governing bodies (e.g., UK Sport), national Olympic Committee, player unions within specific sport federations (e.g., the National Basketball Players Association), academic institutes (e.g., Springfield

College), and independent organisations linked to sport settings (e.g., Women’s Sport Foundation).

Table 2. 1.
Organisational Career Transition Programmes

Programmes	Comprise	Institution	Country
Athlete Career and Education Program (ACE)	Overall individual development	Australian Institute of Sport	Australia
Career Assistant Program for Athletes	Educational program for Olympic athletes	U.S Olympic Committee	USA
Performance Lifestyle Programme	Education/career support	The English Institute of Sport	UK
Olympic Athletes Career Center-National Sport Center	Occasional/educational support	Olympic Athlete Career Center	Canada
Rosetta Stone	Learning other language	Ladies Professional Golf Association	USA
Athlete Lifestyle Programme	Educational/career support Post-sport career support	Irish Institute Sport	Republic of Ireland
The Retiring Athletes	Retirement support	Dutch Olympic Committee	Netherlands
Woman’s’ Sport Services	Resume writing Provides information of jobs in the sports industry	Ladies Professional Golf Association	USA
CHAMPS/Life skills	Total development program for student-athletes’ personal success	National Collegiate Athletics Association	USA

The Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) is supporting athletes by providing programmes to learn other languages and enhance résumé writing skills (http://www.lpga.com/content_1.aspx?pid=4391&mid=6). The National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) developed the student athletes’ development support programme, which is called “CHAMPS/Life skills” in 1991, and has supported athletes since 1994. The programme basically aims to support student athletes to succeed both in their athletic careers and post-athletic careers through conferences and symposia

(http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/ncaahome?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/ncaa/NCA/A/Academics%20and%20Athletes/CHAMPS%20-%20Life%20Skills/). Recently, the International Olympic Committee established its athlete support programme and has started to provide guidance and information on athletes' life skills development and career transition issues via its official internet homepage

(<http://www.olympic.org/en/content/Olympic-Athletes/Elite-Athletes/>). The programme aims to enhance elite athletes' successful daily lives both inside and outside sport, and contains three major areas, including education (e.g., basic skills for enhancing academic achievement and time management), life skills (e.g., public speaking and problem solving), and employment (e.g., CV writing and interview skills).

Australia's Athlete Career and Education Programme, which has been provided to elite athletes since 1995, is known as the most successful supporting programme in the world. The programme aims to assist athletes to develop life skills through balanced lifestyles, including education and vocational skills (Anderson & Morris, 2000). The United Kingdom Sport Institute (UK Sport) developed a UK version of the ACE programme and has provided the programme since 1999, and the UK Sport rebranded ACE to the Performance Lifestyle programme and the programme has been UK's athlete support programme since 2004. The programme contains several sub-topics, including personal development, educational guidance, career planning, career transition support, and Olympic and Paralympic employment networks (Gilmore, 2008; North & Lavalley, 2004). In 1988, the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) launched the Career Assistance Programme for Athletes (CAPA). The programme was developed based on a life span development model (Danish & D'Augelli, 1980) and aimed to enhance athletes' individual development. A total of 142 elite athletes participated in the programme and 98% of them reported that they were satisfied with it

(Petitpas, Danish, McKelvain, & Murphy, 1992), but the programme no longer exists because of funding cuts (Anderson & Morris, 2000).

The athlete support programmes in Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, the UK, and the USA have different titles, but the aims of supporting athletes are the same, including developing athletes' life skills, providing academic support, and assisting job searching (Table, 2.2). The athlete support programmes also aim to take a proactive approach and provide holistic support. Additionally, through providing athlete support programmes, institutes or organisations try to encourage athletes to become well-balanced individuals and enhance their athletic performance while competing (Anderson & Morris, 2000).

Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) noted the limitations of intervention programmes for retired athletes because of sports' organisational structures and a lack of human resources. Mostly in a sport context, sport psychologists and administrators belong to sport teams or governing bodies and they focus on active athletes' performance enhancement. The framework of organisation and a lack of support systems cause limitations in support for athletes' transitions, and when actual retirement happens, there is no assistance available to the retired athletes, because they are no longer team members. Additionally, Anderson and Morris (2000) also discussed the limitations or risks of the programmes, including a lack of conviction in the need for the programmes and financial issues because only a small amount of evidence has been found for the effectiveness of intervention programmes in athlete career transition or performance enhancement.

In summary, researchers have suggested the need for athlete support programmes for athletes' healthy career transition experiences. Nowadays, several sport organisations in the world provide programmes based on enhancing individual

development. Some researchers have stated the obligations of national governing bodies and noted the limitations and risks of providing the programmes, such as funding cuts and lack of resources (Anderson & Morris, 2000).

2.5 Unsolved Issues

The study area has been developed gradually for the past three decades. However, there are still unsolved issues related to athletes' career transitions. Since pre-transition planning and degree of life skill development are positively related to healthy career transitions, researchers have highlighted a need of providing proactive intervention to athletes. However, in the literature, there is no sufficient evidence to predict when athletes initiate their career transition process. In addition, although the conceptual models in the study area (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) provide exploratory variables, which help to predict the quality of athletes' career transitions, none of the existing models contains explanation of athletes' retirement decision-making process. Examining the later stages of athletic career and retirement decision-making process might help to identify when athletes' retirement process initiates to them and what process they go through during the process.

For the past 30 years, researchers (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) have focused on identifying relationships between voluntariness of athletes' retirement and the quality of post-sport life adjustment rather than identifying various influential factors for their decision. Therefore, other variables that can also influence on athletes' decision and the quality of post-sport life adjustment, such as cultural diversity and organisational influences, were often excluded from the literature. As similar to other areas of sport psychology discipline (Kamphoff, Gill, Araki, & Hammond, 2010), career transition study area does not have sufficient research related to cultural diversity or organisational culture. Recently, Stambulova et al. (2009) emphasized potential

influence of cultural aspects and sport contexts (e.g., organisational culture, sport system) on the quality of athletes' career transitions. Research findings from cross-cultural studies in other areas of sport psychology indicated that Asian and Western athletes showed differences in using coping strategies and developing their sense of self (Anshell et al., 1997; Bhalla & Weiss, 2010). In addition, regarding to individuals' decision-making, Briley et al., (2000) and Mau (2000) revealed that individuals from different cultural background had different decision-making styles. Since the majority of studies in the study area have been conducted with Western samples, there are very little evidences related to cultural influences and sport contexts on athletes' career transitions. Therefore, examining Korean athletes' career transition experiences might help to reveal influence of cultural diversity and sport contexts on their decisions and the quality of post-sport life adjustment.

In career transition study area, only few study findings (Fernandez et al., 2006; Fleuriel & Vincent, 2009) have suggested relationships between organisational influences and the quality of athletes' career transitions. Fernandez et al. (2006) revealed that conflict between athletes and organisations could be one of the reasons for their retirement. In addition, sport organisations might involve in national team selection which could lead athletes to experience forced retirement because of being cut from the team. It might be useful to examine influence of organisational culture on athletes' retirement decision-making and the quality of career transition because it will help to identify better organisational strategies in assisting athletes' career transition process.

2.6 Summary and Statement of the Problem

Researchers have shown interest in the study of athletes' career transition for the past three decades, and the study area has grown gradually over time. In the initial

stages of research, investigators focused on the reasons for athletes' retirement and the consequences of leaving sport (e.g., Haerle, 1975; Mihovilovic, 1968). Since the 1990s, the study area has expanded to find various predictors for the quality of athletes' adjustment to post-sport life and within sport career transitions (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Lally, 2007). Research findings indicate that athletes' career transition out of sport is a process, not a singular event, and the quality of career transition tends to relate to the degree of individual development and coping resources. Based on previous research findings, the majority of investigators have considered athletes' career transition as a process. Some researchers (e.g., Gordon, 1995; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) have developed several conceptual models of career transition in sport and have suggested a need for providing intervention programmes to support athletes' career transitions (e.g., Danish et al., 1992; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

Although the study area of athletes' career transition has been growing gradually, more studies are still required to understand and support athletes' career transitions. The majority of studies have focused on voluntariness of athletes' retirement and post-sport adjustment process. However, there is a gap between reasons for retirement and post-sport life adjustment, because in the literature, there is a very little explanation related to athletes' retirement decision-making process. Some researchers (e.g., Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Fernandez et al., 2006) have emphasized usefulness of understanding athletes' retirement decision-making process, because the process is a part of athletes' career transition experiences. However, none of the existing models (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) in the study area contains explanation regarding process of retirement decision-making, which could provide better understanding of overall athletes' career transition process.

In health psychology, the transtheoretical or stages of change model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992) attempts to explain individuals' behavioural and cognitive changes, including decision-making. Nowadays, the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984) is applied in various fields, not only for changes in problematic behaviours, such as smoking cessation and quitting cocaine, but also for the acquisition of positive behaviours, including sunscreen use and exercise participation (Prochaska, Velicer, Rossi, Goldstein, Marcus, Rakowski, Fiore, Harlow, Redding, Rosenbloom, & Rossi, 1994). The model may help to explain the sport retirement decision, because the athletes' decision to retire involves both the termination of some behaviours and the acquisition of new behaviours. Studies (e.g., Kadlcik & Flemer, 2008; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000) showed that the athlete career transition process accompanies both decision-making and changes in lifestyle, which parallels the behaviour changes in the transtheoretical model. In addition, the term "readiness for career transition" could be substituted for the term "readiness for change" in transtheoretical model parlance (c.f., Alfermann et al., 2004; DiClemente et al., 1985). The model consists of three components, including the stages of change, the processes of change, and the levels of change (Prochaska, et al. 1994; DiClemente & Prochaska, 1998).

Stages of change: The stages of change component explains five stages individuals go through during behavioural change. The five stages include: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. In the pre-contemplation stage, individuals are not considering any change in behaviour. Contemplation is a period when individuals are aware of a need to change their behaviour and are seriously thinking about changing, but are still not ready to do so. In the preparation stage, people intend to take an action and show small behaviour changes

for preparing their actual changes. The action stage is the stage when actual changes in behaviour, experiences, or the environment occur. After the action stage, if individuals can maintain the changed behaviour for longer than 6 months, they are in the maintenance stage. People may not progress through the stages in a linear manner, but may spiral around the stages, and individuals can experience relapse and recycling, which refer to one's regressing to an earlier stage during the change process (Prochaska et al., 1992).

Processes of change: The processes of change include 10 strategies that facilitate progress through the stages of change. Prochaska and DiClemente (1984) discussed the processes of change as basic coping activities, which individuals apply during the change process to facilitate movement through the stages of change. Among the 10 processes of change, five are experiential processes, including consciousness-raising (increasing information about the problematic behaviour), self-re-evaluation (assessing one's feelings and thoughts), dramatic relief (expressing emotions about problematic behaviour), environmental re-evaluation (assessing how one's problematic behaviour or change influence others), and helping relationships (social support). The other five processes are behavioural processes, such as reinforcement management (rewarding self-changes), self-liberation (taking action or self-belief in ability to change), counter-conditioning (finding alternative behaviours), social liberation (increasing alternative external resources), and stimulus control (avoiding stimulation of the problem behaviour).

Levels of change: The levels of change refer to variation in psychological problems individuals experience during the change process and sometimes it requires practical work, which may involve psychotherapy. There are five different levels in the transtheoretical model, including; symptom/situational, maladaptive cognitions,

interpersonal conflict, family/system conflict, and intrapersonal conflict (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984). Prochaska and DiClemente (1984) revealed that individuals may experience more than one level of change during the change process, and in practical settings, if practitioners can identify and examine individuals' psychological problems during the change process then therapists can support individuals to move to the next stages.

The transtheoretical model contains two underlying dimensions (i.e., decisional balance and self-efficacy) revealing ones' readiness to change. The concept of decisional balance is based on Janis and Mann's (1977) decision-making model. The model shows the role of considering gains and losses in individuals' decision-making, including: (a) gains and losses for the self, (b) gains and losses for significant others, (c) approval or disapproval from significant others, and (d) self-approval or self-disapproval. In the transtheoretical model, decisional balance has been simplified to a two-factor structure and appeared as pros and cons for changing behaviour. Velicer, DiClemente, Prochaska, and Brandenburg (1985) revealed that the decisional balance could help predict individuals' cognitive and motivational changes during their behaviour changes. Self-efficacy represents the degree of individuals' confidence in the behavioural changes they face (Bandura, 1977). The transtheoretical model indicates that individuals, who have higher self-efficacy, show increase in a stage movement, which refers to progress of their behaviour changes.

Based on previous findings (e.g., Haerle, 1975; Lally, 2007; Wippert & Wippert, 2008), there are similarities between athletes' decision to retire from sport and the stages of change model. The studies with voluntarily retired athletes indicated that: (a) active athletes did not consider post-sport life until their retirement from sport was imminent (pre-contemplation); (b) athletes started to consider their sport career end

when they had certain reasons, such as injury or new job opportunity (contemplation); (c) athletes started to prepare for post-sport life, and after they felt ready, they made their decision (preparation); (d) after the decision had been made, actual leaving occurred (action); and (e) athletes showed some degree of adjustment to their post-sport life over time (maintenance). For this reason, the present thesis employed the transtheoretical model as a theoretical framework for examining Korean athletes' retirement decision-making process.

According to previous findings (Briley et al., 2000; Mau, 2000), individual's cultural background was one of the influential factors for their decision-making styles. Researchers in recent reviews (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009; Stambulova et al., 2009) highlighted that cultural issues and sport systems might be influential factors for the quality of athletes' career transitions. However, the majority of studies have been conducted in Western nations, and only three studies have examined Asian athletes (Chow, 2001; Huang, Schmid, & Hackfort, 2001; Leung et al., 2005). Through examining Korean athletes' career transition experiences, the current thesis might provide influence of cultural aspects and sport contexts on athletes' retirement decision-making process and the quality of their post-sport life adjustment.

Organisational culture has been discussed in sport area recently (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012). Investigators tried to identify how organisational cultures or functions influence on athletes' performance (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Woodman & Hardy, 2001) and examine psychological factors associate with good practice among staff from organisations (Wagstaff et al., 2012). Although organisational involvement in athletes' career transition has been discussed, studies related organisational cultures and influences in athletes' career transitions are rare. For example, findings (Herman, 2002) in athletes' career transition area indicated

athletes perceived that sport organisations have obligations in supporting athletes' career transitions. Several researchers (e.g., Baillie & Danish, 1992; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) have emphasized a need of providing career transition support to both active and retiring athletes. In order to identify practical issues, it might be useful to examine influence of organisational culture in athletes' retirement decision-making and the quality of athletes' career transitions.

The purpose of this thesis is to extend knowledge of athletes' career transitions through: (a) identifying the current status of knowledge of the study area through providing a systematic review of athletes' career transition studies, (b) understanding Korean tennis players' process of retirement from sport and exploring athletes' retirement decision-making process, and (c) exploring one national governing body's viewpoint on supporting athletes and its process of developing an athletes' career transition support programme.

2.7 Methodology Employed

The present thesis employed various research methods. Study 1 in the present thesis employed systematic review method. The aim of the systematic review is to provide literature review focusing on a certain research question throughout identifying and evaluating the summaries of existing research findings (University of York, Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2009). Craig, Dieppe, Macintyre, Michie, Nazareth, and Petticrew (2008) have highlighted the benefits of conducting systematic reviews in developing interventions and designing future studies. Although the study area has been growing gradually over 30 years, findings in the study area has not been analysed through a systematic review method. Therefore, conducting systematic review might help to identify current knowledge of study area and provide future research directions.

Three empirical studies in the current thesis (Study 2, 3, and 4) were conducted via three different qualitative research methods, including Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Study 2), focus groups (Study 3), and a case study (Study 4). IPA is developed based on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography and focuses on analysing individuals' cognitive, affective, and existential experiences (Smith et al., 2009). IPA aims to explore the first person accounts or perspectives from the third person. Therefore, the method allows researchers to explore deeper meanings of athletes' experiences than other analysis methods, including cultural influences and cognitive and behavioural changes during the process.

Study 3 was conducted via focus groups. Focus groups method is known as conducting interviews with small groups of people and suitable to explore little known phenomenon (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). Since athletes' retirement decision-making process has not been examined widely, the method is suitable to explore the process and provided strength for the study, such as collecting data from divers groups of people and observing group dynamics.

A case study method was used for Study 4. A case study has been used widely in social study area because the method allows researchers to examine certain phenomenon in real life context (Yin, 2009). The strength of using a case study method is collecting various kinds of data in many different forms (e.g., individual interviews, documentation; Yin, 2009). The case for the Study 4 was the development of the athlete retirement programme of the IIS. Various types of data sources related to the programme development helped to explore influences of organisational culture in athletes' career transitions.

Chapter Three

Study 1: Athletes' Career Transition Out of Sport: A Systematic Review

3.1 Introduction

Research on athletes' career transitions out of sport has been growing gradually over the past three decades since the first publication on the topic (Mihovilovic, 1968). Investigators have found various predictors (e.g., athletic identity, voluntary control over the decision to retire) of the quality of the career transition for athletes (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007). In the early stages, researchers focused on the consequences of athletes' career transition out of sport, but more recently, they have distinguished between specific types of transitions, such as young athletes' disengagement/withdrawal from sport and within sport career transitions (e.g., Wylleman et al., 2004). Since the 1990s, researchers have developed appropriate models describing athletes' career transitions (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994), and several review papers have also been published on the phenomenon providing guidance for future research directions (e.g., Baillie & Danish, 1992; Crook & Robertson, 1991; Wylleman et al., 2004).

In recent years, several book chapters have been published related to career transitions in sport (e.g., Lavalley & Andersen, 2000; Wylleman, De Knop, Verdet, & Cecić Erpič, 2007). Lavalley, Wylleman, and Sinclair (2000) briefly reviewed existing publications related to career transitions in sport up to 1998. Their review aimed to provide a descriptive account of each publication and an annotated reference list for readers. It has been more than a decade since Lavalley et al. published their annotated bibliography, and there have been numerous investigations published on the topic of career transitions in sport. In addition, a systematic review methodology has not been used to analyse studies on athletes' career transitions in any previous review. The aim of the systematic review is to provide literature review focusing on a certain research question throughout identifying and evaluating the summaries of existing research

findings (University of York, Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2009). According to Craig et al., systematic reviews allow researchers to use the best available evidence and appropriate theories to develop future research directions and intervention strategies, as well as raise awareness of the range of research methods employed in the study area. It is useful to conduct a systematic review of career transition studies to identify current knowledge of the study area, future research directions, and practical implications. In addition, examining previous findings and identifying gaps in the current knowledge will help build and develop further studies of the present thesis.

The purpose of this study was to identify the current status of knowledge in the area through providing a systematic review of athletes' career transition studies, focusing on sample characteristics, research designs, and psychological variables associated with the quality of athlete career transition. Studies conducted from 1968 to the end of 2010 were included, while publications not containing or examining information associated with the career transition out of sport process were excluded. In addition, although the topic of athletes' within sport career transitions is an important and growing area of research, the current review focused on identifying issues related to athletes' career transition out of sport. The current review only focuses on career transition out of sport because of two reasons. The first reason is that the characteristics between termination of sport and within sport career transitions are different; therefore, correlates and sample characteristics of the research findings could be discord between two transitions. The second reason is that since researchers have heavily focused on a topic of career termination, even if this review includes within sport career transition studies, research findings of within sport career transitions might not be enough to provide its unique characteristics compared to career transition out of sport.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Sources

The search strategy initially included the use of the following electronic databases: Dissertation Abstracts International, Google Scholar, Pubmed, ProQuest, and The World of Knowledge. I then examined the table of contents of the following journals: *Academic Athletic Journal*, *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, *Athletic Insight*, *Australian Journal of Career Development*, *Australian Psychologist*, *Avante*, *British Journal of Sport Medicine*, *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *Journal of Aging Studies*, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *Journal of Personal and Interpersonal Loss*, *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, *Journal of Sport Behavior*, *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, *Sport and Exercise Psychology Review*, *Journal of Sports Sciences*, *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *Quest*, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, and *The Sport Psychologist*. Additional citations were subsequently gathered through reading the reference lists of the articles already obtained. Keyword combinations employed in the search strategies included *career transitions in sport*, *career transition out of sport*, *athletes' retirement*, *retirement from sport*, *sport career end*, *sport career termination*, *withdraw from sport*, *disengagement from sport*, and *drop-out from sport*.

Inclusion criteria for the current investigation, based on established systematic review procedures (Goodger, Gorely, Lavalley, & Harwood, 2007; Sallis, Prochaska, & Taylor, 2000), were as follows: studies had to be (a) related to athletes' career transition out of sport, (b) based on independent participant populations, and (c) written in English. These criteria included journal articles, published conference proceedings, book

chapters, and dissertations, and imposed no limits on characteristics of samples and research designs. If data from a study were published in multiple ways (e.g., a conference proceeding, a journal article), then I reported the study only once in the following order: (a) journal article, (b) dissertation, and (c) published conference proceeding.

3.2.2 Procedure

Hard copies of studies were collected and assessed against the inclusion criteria. After identifying the studies, the same systematic review procedure as used by Sallis et al. (2000) and Goodger et al. (2007) were applied for analysis. The protocols included the creation of detailed tables (Table 3.1, p. 60 and 3.2, p. 63) classifying (a) research designs and sample characteristics and (b) correlates of the quality of athletes' career transitions. The reasons for focusing on three features (i.e., research designs, sample characteristics, and correlates) were to: (a) identify detailed methodological aspects of the studies to help researchers develop better methods in the future, (b) examine detailed characteristics of sample populations to help investigators identify sampling gaps, and (c) analyse factors related to the quality of athletes' career transitions across studies and identify the evidence base for theories and models to provide future research directions.

3.2.2.1 Assignment of bibliography numbers. Early in the analysis, I coded each study with a bibliography number. These numbers were based on the number of independent samples. For example, if there was more than one independent sample in a publication, then each sample was given a separate bibliography number. In some instances, when the same data were published more than once (e.g., in a journal article and in a published conference proceeding), they were assigned the same bibliography

number. For example, even Alfermann et al.'s (2004) study was published both as a conference proceeding (in 2001) and a journal article (in 2004), the study was given one bibliography number (i.e., 6) because those two publications were based on one study.

3.2.2.2 Research designs and sample characteristics. Samples were distinguished by size, competitive level, type of sport, gender, age, and location. I also classified studies by data collection method and research design. Additionally, if the same sample was published more than once, but assessed different correlates on each occasion, I assigned it the same bibliography number and also a sub-number. For example, the sample associated with reference number 59 was published in three different journal articles, but each publication examined different variables. So the reports were assigned sub-numbers (i.e., 59/1, 59/2, and 59/3) to identify the publication.

3.2.2.3. Correlates of athletes' career transition adjustment. I created a summary table based on the correlates of the quality of career transition (Table 3.2). The summary table was created over several stages. Firstly, I selected and classified the career transition variables from each of the studies. At this stage of analysis, only correlates with more than three independent samples were included in the summary table. Correlates with less than three studies were grouped, where possible, with other similar variables (e.g., self-perception includes self-perceived body image, self-confidence, and self-worth) based on previous literature before being included (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Additionally, some studies examined multiple variables, and in these cases, variables were listed separately in the summary table. Secondly, I examined the direction of the association the variables had with transition quality based on study findings. Each variable has its own relationship with athletes' career transition adjustment experiences, whether positive (+), negative (-), no association (0), or

indeterminate (?). The last stage of the analysis was the summation of the association for each variable by calculating the percentage of samples supporting the direction of association. The guidelines provided by Sallis et al. (2000) for labelling the association were used which include: 0-33% = no association, 34-59% = indeterminate or inconsistent and 60-100% = positive or negative association. Since the current data contained mixture of quantitative and quantitative research findings, there might be a potential risk of concluding 0-33% as a 'no association'. However, through the analysis process, none of the current data resulted in 'no association'; therefore, the data were not influenced by inadequacy of using above guidelines.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 General findings

A total of 139 studies met the inclusion criteria, and among them, 13 studies were inaccessible, and four were excluded because of a lack of information (e.g., sample characteristics, methods, or findings). The remaining 122 study papers included 57 published journal articles, 23 published conference proceedings, four published book chapters, and 38 dissertations. Among the 122 papers, four contained two independent samples (Alfermann, 1995; Fernandez et al., 2006; Herman, 2002; Zaichkowsky, Lipton, & Tucci, 1997). A total of 122 papers were reviewed, and in a final bibliography table (Table 3.1 and 3.2), 126 studies were listed. Among the 126 studies, 10 studies were published before 1990, 48 in the 1990s, and 68 between 2000 and 2010.

3.3.2 Research design

Table 3.1 presents design and sample characteristics. Researchers have used qualitative (55), quantitative (56), or a combination of both (15) methods to examine

of athletes' support programme involvement, were conducted via experiments (Lavalley, 2005; Selden, 1997; Stankovich, 1998). Investigators used longitudinal designs in 13 studies, and employed cross-sectional methods in 113 studies. Slightly over half of the studies (68) collected data via interviews and the rest (58) via questionnaires. The questionnaire used can be divided into three categories: (a) questionnaires developed for assessing athletes' career transitions (10 studies), (b) instruments which examine general psychological variables (15 studies), and (c) surveys developed for the purpose of the particular study (33 studies). The most frequently used questionnaire was the *Athletic Identity Measurement Scale* (AIMS; Brewer et al., 1993), employed in nine studies (Blackburn, 2003; Fraser, Fogarty, & Albion, 2010; Grove et al., 1997; Herman, 2002; Lavalley et al., 1997; Shachar et al., 2004; Selden, 1997; Stronach & Adair, 2010; Zaichkowsky et al., 2000).

3.3.3 Sample characteristics

The total number of participants was 13,511, and the sample sizes ranged from 1 to 1,617. Across the samples, 1,909 were current athletes, 51 were athletes' entourage (e.g., families and coaches), 219 were non-athletes, and 11,332 were retired athletes. The number of studies with fewer than 50 participants was 71, and 36 studies were conducted with samples between 51 and 200. Eleven studies had samples between 201 and 500, seven studies examined over 500 participants, and one was not identified because of a lack of information. Most studies (121) investigated athletes' career transition experiences or compared experiences between athlete and non-athlete groups, and five included both athletes and their entourages (Gilmore, 2008; Kane, 1991; Redmond, Gordon, & Chambers, 2007; Stambulova, 1994; Zaichkowsky et al., 2000). These five studies aimed to discover how athletes' families, coaches, and administrators influence or are influenced by athlete sport career termination.

Across the studies, 56 contained both genders, 38 contained male athletes only, 24 contained female athletes only, and gender was unspecified in eight studies. The studies included a wide range of competitive levels, including student (32), club (7), professional (27), and elite/Olympic level athletes (50). Mixed level athletes were examined in six studies, two studies were conducted with disabled athletes, and in two studies the level was not identified.

Researchers have examined team sports (36), individual sports (26), or a combination of both (59), and five did not report the type of sport. In 53 studies the athletes were aged between 16 and 26, in 21 studies athletes were aged between 27 and 40, and in five studies the athletes were over 40. A wide range of age groups (aged between 15 and 84) were examined in 17 studies, two studies were done with athletes aged under 16, and 28 studies did not report the age of participants. The majority of studies were conducted in Western countries (60 in North-America, 45 in Europe, and 10 in Australia). Three studies had been conducted in Asia and South America, and two studies had been done in the Middle East. One study existed with African athletes, and two studies did not identify where data originated.

Table 3. 1.
Research Designs and Sample Characteristics

Study Characteristics	Reference Number	Samples	<i>k</i>
Design			
Qualitative	2, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 39, 41, 47, 48, 49, 53, 54, 55, 61, 62, 66, 69, 70, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 85, 87, 93, 94, 100, 102, 103, 105, 106, 108, 109, 110, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117	55	
Quantitative	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15, 20, 25, 26, 27, 31, 33, 36, 37, 38, 42, 43, 45, 51, 52, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63, 64, 67, 71, 72, 79, 82, 83, 84, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 96, 97, 99, 104, 107, 112, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126	56	
Combined	3, 35, 40, 44, 46, 50, 65, 68, 73, 80, 95, 98, 101, 111, 124	15	
Longitudinal	2, 3, 14, 28, 33, 51, 55, 75, 80, 87, 98, 121, 124	13	
Cross-sectional	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 125, 126	113	
Data Collection			
Interview	2, 3, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 39, 40, 41, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 61, 62, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 85, 87, 93, 94, 95, 98/2, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 124	70	68
Questionnaire related to athletes' Career transition	1, 15, 20, 31, 40, 44, 57, 58, 63, 68, 86, 95, 96, 97, 120	15	10
Questionnaire related to psychology	12, 33, 42, 57, 59/1, 59/2, 59/3, 60, 72, 79/1, 79/2, 83, 88, 89, 90, 91, 97, 98/1, 102, 111, 121, 124	22	15
Self-created questionnaire	4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 25, 26, 27, 35, 36, 37, 38, 42, 43, 45, 46, 50, 51, 52, 56, 64, 65, 67, 71, 72, 73, 79/2, 80, 82, 84, 88, 92, 98/2, 99, 101, 104, 107, 112, 118, 119, 122, 123, 125, 126	43	33
Sample Size			
1-10	1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 16, 19, 24, 28, 41, 48, 49, 55, 61, 62, 66, 69, 70, 74, 76, 77, 78, 81, 93, 100, 103, 110, 111, 117	29	
11-50	3, 7, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 26, 29, 30, 32, 34, 39, 42, 45, 47, 51, 53, 54, 59, 60, 73, 75, 85, 87, 89, 98, 102, 105, 106, 107, 108, 113, 114, 115, 116, 121, 123, 124	42	
51-100	4, 5, 20, 33, 43, 46, 50, 57, 58, 67, 72, 79, 80, 91, 97, 99, 109, 112, 118, 120, 126	21	

Study Characteristics	Reference Number	Samples	k
101-200	35, 36, 40, 44, 52, 63, 68, 71, 83, 84, 86, 90, 92, 95, 96	15	
201-300	6, 9, 31, 56, 65, 94, 125	7	
301-500	12, 27, 38, 122	4	
500-1000	25, 64, 82, 104	4	
Over 1000	37, 88, 101	3	
Not identified	119	1	
Gender			
Females	2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 18, 19, 22, 28, 35, 41, 42, 46, 49, 50, 62, 71, 74, 75, 81, 93, 110, 117, 123	24	
Males	1, 11, 13, 21, 24, 27, 29, 32, 34, 38, 43, 45, 51, 52, 53, 57, 58, 61, 64, 66, 67, 69, 70, 73, 78, 79, 82, 83, 88, 100, 102, 103, 111, 113, 118, 119, 120, 124	38	
Combined	4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20, 25, 30, 31, 33, 36, 37, 39, 40, 44, 47, 48, 55, 59, 60, 63, 65, 68, 72, 76, 77, 80, 84, 86, 89, 90, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 112, 114, 115, 116, 121, 122, 125, 126	56	
Not identified	15, 23, 26, 54, 56, 85, 87, 91	8	
Competitive Level			
High school or College	8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 26, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 51, 55, 56, 65, 75, 78, 79, 80, 84, 87, 89, 93, 97, 107, 119, 124, 125, 126	32	
Club (non-professional)	27, 31, 46, 53, 58, 62, 73	7	
Elite (national, international, Olympic)	2, 3, 5, 6, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 30, 33, 35, 44, 47, 49, 50, 52, 54, 59, 60, 61, 63, 68, 72, 76, 77, 81, 85, 86, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 101, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109, 110, 114, 117, 118, 120	50	
Professional	1, 7, 13, 24, 28, 29, 32, 34, 38, 43, 45, 48, 57, 64, 66, 67, 69, 70, 82, 83, 88, 100, 103, 111, 113, 121, 123	27	
Mixed	9, 71, 74, 102, 112, 122	6	
Disabled	115, 116	2	
Not Identified	4, 90	2	
Type of Sport			
Team Sport	1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 13, 19, 27, 32, 34, 38, 41, 42, 43, 45, 48, 51, 57, 58, 64, 66, 69, 70, 71, 73, 78, 81, 82, 83, 88, 111, 113, 118, 120, 124, 126	36	
Individual Sport	3, 4, 7, 18, 28, 46, 49, 54, 62, 65, 67, 68, 74, 85, 86, 87, 91, 93, 98, 100, 102, 110, 117, 121, 122, 123	26	
Combined	5, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 29, 30, 31, 33, 36, 35, 37, 39, 40, 44, 47, 50, 53, 52, 55, 59, 60, 63, 64, 72, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 84, 89, 90, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109, 112, 114, 115, 116, 125	59	
Not Identified	26, 56, 61, 107, 119	5	
Ages			
Under 16	46, 80	2	

Study Characteristics	Reference Number	Samples	<i>k</i>
16-26	1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 22, 26, 31, 36, 39, 40, 41, 42, 49, 51, 52, 55, 56, 58, 59, 62, 64, 65, 66, 70, 71, 75, 78, 79, 84, 86, 87, 89, 90, 93, 95, 97, 107, 110, 112, 117, 118, 119, 121, 122, 124, 125, 126	53	
27-40	4, 6, 17, 24, 28, 32, 34, 44, 47, 57, 60, 63, 69, 74, 76, 96, 98, 99, 100, 102, 115	21	
Over 40	15, 68, 105, 109, 120	5	
Wide Range (15-85)	11, 20, 25, 27, 29, 35, 50, 67, 73, 83, 88, 92, 94, 101, 103, 104, 116	17	
Not Identified	2, 7, 9, 13, 21, 23, 30, 33, 37, 38, 43, 45, 48, 53, 54, 61, 72, 77, 81, 82, 85, 91, 106, 108, 111, 113, 114, 123	28	
Location			
North America	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 20, 24, 26, 27, 29, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 48, 49, 50, 51, 55, 56, 61, 64, 65, 66, 70, 71, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 82, 83, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 97, 103, 104, 105, 109, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 122, 124, 125, 126	61	60
Europe	3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 43, 44, 47, 52, 53, 54, 57, 58, 62, 69, 73, 80, 84, 85, 86, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 101, 106, 107, 108, 110, 112, 116, 121	47	45
Australia	2, 23, 32, 33, 59, 60, 67, 81, 102, 123	10	10
Other nations	1, 15, 120 (Brazil), 22 (Hong Kong), 44, 63 (China), 68 (South Africa), 90, 116 (Israel)	9	9
Not identified	46, 72	2	2

Note. *k* = number of sample populations.

1= Agresta, Regina, Brandão, Paula, & Rebustini (2003); 2= Albion (2007); 3 & 4= Alfermann (1995); 5= Alfermann & Gross (1997); 6= Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte (2004); 7= Allison & Meyer (1988); 8= Archer (2010); 9= Baillie (1992); 10= Barners (2002); 11= Beamon (2007); 12= Blackburn (2003); 13= Blæsild & Steler (2003); 14= Blinde & Stratta (1992); 15= Brandão, Winterstein, Pinheiro, Agresta, Akel, & Martini (2001); 16= Butt & Molnar (2009); 17= Cecić Erpič (2003) 18= Cecić Erpič (2007a) 19= Cecić Erpič (2007b) 20= Cecić Erpič, Wylleman, & Zupančič (2004); 21= Chamalidis (1997); 22= Chow (2001); 23= Clemmet, Hanrahan, & Murray (2010); 24= Coakley (2006); 25= Conzelmann & Nagel (2003); 26= Cramer-Hamman (1994); 27= Curtis & Ennis (1988); 28= Douglas & Carless (2009); 29= Drahota & Eitzen (1998); 30 & 31= Fernandez, Stephan, & Fouqereau (2006); 32= Fortunato & Marchant (1999); 33= Fraser, Fogarty, & Albion (2010); 34= Gearing (1999); 35= Gilmore (2008); 36= Goddard (2004); 37= Greendorfer & Blinde (1985); 38= Haerle (1975); 39= Harrison & Lawrence (2003); 40= Harrison & Lawrence (2004); 41 & 42= Herman (2002); 43= Houlston (1982); 44= Huang (2002); 45= Hughes (1990); 46= Johns, Lindner, & Wolko (1990); 47= Kadlcik & Flemer (2008); 48= Kane (1991); 49= Kerr & Dacyshyn (2000); 50= Kirby (1986); 51= Kolbasovsky (2001); 52= Koukouris (1991); 53= Koukouris (1994); 54= Koukouris (2001); 55= Lally (2007); 56= Lantz (1995); 57= Lavallee (2005); 58= Lavallee, Golby, & Lavallee (2002); 59/1= Lavallee, Gordon, & Grove (1996); 59/2= Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon (1997); 59/3= Lavallee, Grove, & Gordon (1997); 60= Lavallee, Gordon, & Grove (1997); 61= Lavallee, Nesti, Borkoles, Cockerill & Edge (2000); 62= Lavallee & Robinson (2007); 63= Leung, Carre, & Fu (2005); 64= Lewis (1997); 65= Lipton (1997); 66= Lotysz & Short (2004) 67= Lynch (2006); 68= Marthinus (2007); 69= McKenna & Thomas (2007); 70= McKnight (1996); 71= McKnight (2007); 72= Menkenhorst & Van Den Berg (1997); 73= Mihovilovic (1968); 74= Missler (1996); 75= Munroe, Albinson, & Hall (1999); 76= Muscat (2010); 77= Newell (2005); 78= Parker (1994); 79/1= Perna, Zaichkowsky, & Bocknek (1996); 79/2= Perna, Ahlgren, & Zaichkowsky (1999); 80= Piffaretti, Schnyder, Mahler, Barbat, & Keller (2003); 81= Redmond, Gordon, & Chambers (2007); 82= Reynolds (1981); 83= Rhodes (1993); 84= Schmid & Schilling (1997); 85= Schmid & Seiler (2003); 86= Schmidt & Hackfort (2001); 87= Schwendener-Holt (1994); 88= Schwenk, Gorenflo, Dopp, & Hipple (2007); 89= Selden (1997); 90= Shachar, Brewer, Cornelius, & Petitpas (2004); 91= Shaffer (1990); 92= Sinclair & Orlick (1993); 93= Sparkes (1998); 94= Stambulova (1994); 95= Stambulova (2001); 96= Stambulova, Stephan, & Jäphag (2007); 97= Stankovich (1998); 98/1= Stephan, Bilard, Ninot, & Delignières (2003a); 98/2= Stephan, Bilard, Ninot, & Delignières (2003b); 99= Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez (2007); 100= Stier (2007); 101= Strählman (2006); 102= Stronach & Adair (2010); 103= Swain (1991); 104= Tate (1993); 105= Tinley (2002); 106= Torregrosa, Boixadós, Valiente, & Cruz (2004); 107= Torregrosa, Mateos, Sanchez, & Cruz (2007); 108= Torregrosa, Sanchez, & Cruz (2003); 109= Ungerleider (1997); 110= Warriner & Lavallee (2008); 111= Washington (1981); 112= Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick (1998); 113= Weiss (1992); 114= Werthner & Orlick (1986); 115= Wheeler, Malone, VanVlack, Nelson, & Steadward (1996); 116= Wheeler, Steadward, Legg, Hutzler, Campbell, & Johnson (1999); 117= Wilder (1999); 118= Williams-Rice (1990); 119= Williams (1991); 120= Winterstein, Brandão, Pinheiro, Agresta, Akel, & Martini (2001); 121= Wippert & Wippert (2008); 122= Wong (2010); 123= Young, Pearce, Kane, & Pain (2006); 124= Zaichkowsky, King, & McCarthy (2000); 125 & 126= Zaichkowsky, Lipton, & Tucci (1997)

Table 3. 2.
Correlates Associated with Athletes' Career Transition Adjustment and the Quality of Career Transition

Correlates	References numbers	# of studies	Associations (%)				Sum code
			+	-	0	?	
<u>Factors related to the quality of career transition</u>							
Athletic identity	6-, 8-, 11-, 12-, 13-, 20-, 21-, 24-, 28-, 34=, 35-, 41-, 42-, 49-, 51-, 55-, 59/2*-, 60-, 62-, 66-, 67-, 68-, 75-, 76-, 84-, 93-, 95-, 100-, 101-, 109-, 110-, 111-, 112-, 115-, 116-	35		97 (34)	3 (1)		-
Demographics	Genders 31*-, 37=, 95≠ (Female +), 125=, Age 20=, 22+, 35*+, 63=, Social status 25+, 43+, 53+, Types of sport 31*-, 35*-, 104=, Races 64≠? (African American +), 79/1*≠? (Caucasian American +), Marital status 31*+, 70+, Competitive level 35+, 63+, Nations 6=, 86=, 96?, Cultures 44≠?	24 (k=20)	37 (9)		42 (10)	21 (5)	?
Voluntariness of decision	1+, 2+, 4=, 13+, 14+, 16+, 20+, 29+, 32+, 35+, 49=, 50+, 59/3*+, 66+, 67+, 69+, 76+, 80+, 99=, 112+, 116+	21	86 (18)		14 (3)		+
Injuries/health problems	35-, 45-, 47-, 66-, 76-, 79/2*-, 95-, 101-, 114-, 116-, 122-	11		91 (10)	9 (1)		-
Career/personal development	22+, 48+, 56+, 59/1*+, 76+, 101+, 102+, 103+, 117+	9	100 (9)				+
Sport career achievement	2+, 20+, 22+, 25+, 53+, 91+, 92+, 114+, 116+	9	100 (9)				+
Educational status	20+, 22+, 25+, 53+, 68+, 82+, 103+, 119+	8	100 (8)				+
Financial status	52+, 53+, 66+, 72+, 101+, 103+, 114+, 116+	8	100 (8)				+
Self-perception	Body image, 49+, 62+, 93+, 98/2*+, 99+, Self-worth, 74+, 98/1*+, Self-confidence, 77+	8 (k=7)	100 (8)				+
Control of life	14+ (Sport system), 48+ (Life), 49+ (Life), 78+ (Sport system), 110+ (Life), 112+ (Life), 118+(Life)	7	100 (7)				+
Disengagement/ Drop-out	3-, 5-, 16-, 46?, 52-, 53-, 54-	7		86 (6)	14 (1)		-

Correlates	References numbers	# of studies	Associations (%)				Sum code
			+	-	0	?	
Time passed after retirement	28+, 37+, 55+, 69+ 83+, 98/2*+, 121+	7	100 (7)				+
Relationships with coach	22+, 46+, 49+, 62+, 76+, 114+	6	100 (6)				+
Life changes	47-, 48-, 49-, 88-, 98/2*-	5		100 (5)			-
Balance of life while competing	39+, 40+, 49+	3	100 (3)				+
<u>Available resources during the career transition</u>							
Coping strategies	5?, 6?, 10?, 15?, 35?, 52?, 55?, 59/2*?, 72?, 95?, 96?, 98/2*?, 105?, 113?, 115?, 118?, 120?, 121? Searching for new career/interest, 16+, 23+, 28+, 74+, 85+, 90=, 91=, 92+, 101+, 114+, 116+, 117+ Keeping busy 9=, 15=, 47+, 66+, 92=, 120=	32	38 (12)	6 (2)	56 (18)		?
Pre-retirement planning	6+, 8+, 9+, 14+, 19+, 20=, 22+, 24+, 26+, 32+, 35+, 38+, 40+, 43+, 45+, 64+, 65+, 66+, 68+, 76+, 77+, 79/2*+, 96+, 101+, 109+, 110+, 122+, 123+, 125+	29	97 (28)	3 (1)			+
Psychosocial support	Emotion & esteem, 10+, 60+, 61=, 66+, 70+, 79/1*+, 85+, 101+, 110+, 114+, Information, 31+, 70+, 98/2+, 121+, Social network, 13+, 48+, 77+, 87+, 88+, 117+, Tangible, 63+, 85+, Not identified (social support), 3+, 22+, 26+, 35?, 47+, 74+, 82+	29 (k=28)	92 (27)	4 (1)	4 (1)		+
Support programme involvement	2+, 35+, 36+, 57+, 81+, 89+, 97+, 107+	8	100 (8)				+

Note. k = number of sample population.

* Same samples (59/1, 59/2, 59/3; 79/1, 79/2; 98/1, 98/2).

3.3.4 Correlates and consequences of career transition

Slightly less than half (55) of the studies investigated the psychological, emotional, social, and physical consequences of athletes' retirement from sport. The other studies examined variables, which influence the quality of athletes' career transition out of sport. Among the 13,511 participants, 11,332 (84%) of them had experienced termination from their sport, and 1,768 (16%) of them reported that their career transition experiences had accompanied adjustment difficulties or problems. In addition, the majority of studies (86) reported that some of their participants expressed career transition difficulties or negative emotions, including feelings of loss, identity crisis, and distress when they ended their career and adjusted to post-sport life (e.g., Ballie, 1992; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; McKenna & Thomas, 2007). Four studies reported that the career transition process was neither a positive nor negative event for participant athletes (e.g., Alfermann, 1995; Johns et al., 1990; Schwenderner-Holt, 1994; Torregrosa, Sanchez, & Cruz, 2003).

I identified 63 correlates related to the quality of athletes' career transitions. These variables were reduced to 19 during the analysis and categorised into two themes: (a) factors related to the quality of career transition and (b) available resources during the career transition.

3.3.4.1 Factors related to the quality of career transition. Table 3.2 shows the correlates and the direction of their associations with the quality of career transition. I identified 15 variables associated with the quality of athletes' career transitions, including athletic identity, demographics, the voluntariness of retirement, injuries/health problems, career/personal development, sport career achievement, educational status, financial status, self-perception, control of life, disengagement/drop-out, time passed

after retirement, relationship with coach, life changes, and life balance. These variables are presented below in the order of the number of studies that examined each of them.

3.3.4.1.1 Athletic identity. Athletic identity refers to individuals' sense of perceived self and others, influenced by their sport participation and performance (Brewer et al., 2000). A total of 35 independent studies demonstrated correlations between athletic identity and athletes' career transitions. Among them, 34 studies indicated that both a strong athletic identity and high tendency towards identity foreclosure were negatively associated with the quality of athletes' career transitions. These studies have revealed that retired athletes experienced a loss of identity when they had a strong athletic identity at the time of their sport career termination, and they needed a longer period of time to adjust to post-sport life (e.g., Grove et al., 1997; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavalley et al., 1997). In addition, when individuals showed a strong athletic identity or a tendency towards identity foreclosure, they were more susceptible to identity crisis or confusion when their sport career ended (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2009; Lally, 2007; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007; Sparkes, 1998; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008).

3.3.4.1.2 Demographics. Although 24 studies examined demographic differences between athletes at the time of career termination, such as gender, age, social status, type of sport, race, marital status, competitive levels, and cultural or national factors, the overall association was indeterminate.

Four studies examined differences in adjustment to post-sport life between male and female athletes, and only one study (Stambulova, 2001) reported that female former athletes adapted to post-sport life more quickly than male retired athletes. Studies conducted by Cecić Erpič et al., (2004) and Leung et al. (2005) indicated positive relationships between retired age of retirement and transition difficulties, but Chow

(2001) and Gilmore (2008) reported that those who terminated their sport career at a younger age expressed higher career transition difficulties. Three studies reported that athletes' social status was positively related to the quality of their career transitions (Conzelmann & Nagel, 2003; Houlston, 1982; Koukouris, 1994). Three studies examined relationships between type of sport and transition difficulties, but no differences were found (Fernandez et al., 2006; Gilmore, 2008; Tate, 1993). Two studies, which demonstrated transitional differences between Caucasian student athletes and African American student athletes, showed opposite directions (Caucasian American athletes experienced more transition difficulties; Lewis, 1997; African American athletes experienced more transition difficulties; Perna et al., 1996). Two studies assessed marital status (Fernandez et al., 2006; McKnight, 1996), and both showed that married athletes experienced a higher degree of perceived support from their partners and less difficulties in transitional process. Two studies showed that competitive level is positively related to financial and occupational adjustment (Gilmore, 2008; Leung et al., 2005). For example, athletes who competed at a higher level (e.g., international level) and had won medals at international events tended to experience less difficulties in finding post-sport careers than those who competed at a lower level (e.g., national level; Gilmore, 2008; Leung et al., 2005).

In cross-national comparisons among European countries, three studies reported some differences, such as age of career termination, athletic career satisfactions, and use of coping strategies. Researchers, however, concluded that athletes' degree of athletic identity and pre-retirement planning had more influence on the quality of their career transitions than their nationalities or cultural differences (Alfermann et al., 2004; Schmidt & Hackfort, 2001; Stambulova et al., 2007). Huang (2002) examined cultural differences between Chinese and German elite level athletes' career transition

experiences. The study reported differences in several areas of post-sport life, including involvement in sport after retirement (more Germans were involved in sport) and current occupations (more Chinese worked in sports-related positions).

3.3.4.1.3 *Voluntariness of retirement decision.* The voluntariness of the retirement decision can be explained as the degree of control athletes have over their decision to retire. The variable has been examined in 21 studies, and 18 indicated a positive association with the quality of career transition, and three found no relationship. Studies (7) with athletes who experienced forced retirement found that participants experienced high levels of negative emotions, such as fear of a social death or dying (Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Zaichkowsky et al., 2000), a sense of betrayal and social exclusion (McKenna & Thomas, 2007), and a loss of identity (Butt & Molnar, 2009; Lotysz & Short, 2004; Lynch, 2006).

3.3.4.1.4 *Injuries/health problems.* Eleven studies examined athletes' injuries and health issues in their career transition out of sport. Among them, 10 studies found that injuries and health issues were positively related with transitional difficulties for retired athletes (e.g., Gilmore, 2008; Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008; Muscat, 2010), and one study showed no association between injury and the quality of post-sport adjustment (Perna, Ahlgren, & Zaichkowsky, 1999). Injuries and health problems were negative factors for retired athletes wishing to move towards post-sport life, and the participants who had physical problems needed longer periods of time to adjust after entering post-sport life (e.g., Werthner and Orlick, 1986). In addition, retired athletes' physical condition was one of the most immediate concerns for the quality of their post-sport life, and some athletes expressed difficulties in dealing with post-sport life because of their physical pains (Gilmore, 2008; Hughes, 1990). In contrast, Perna et al. (1999) did not find any relationship between former collegiate athletes' injuries and their long-term life

satisfaction.

3.3.4.1.5 Career/personal development. Individual development included vocational and life skill development and has been examined in nine studies. All nine studies indicated positive associations with the quality of career transition. Former professional athletes showed difficulties in dealing with non-sporting situations, and they experienced delayed identity shifts due to a lack of non-sporting life experiences during their sport careers (Kane, 1991; Muscat, 2010). Educational involvement and career planning were also positively associated with post-sport life adjustment among college athletes (Lantz, 1995), and athletes attributed their limitation of life choices after sport to a lack of personal development (Chow, 2001; Stronach & Adair, 2010; Swain, 1991).

3.3.4.1.6 Sport career achievement. The number of studies measuring sporting goal achievement was nine, and all reported positive correlations with the quality of career transition. Retired athletes who had succeeded in their sport showed stable levels of self-identity, self-esteem, and global self-concept and less occupational difficulties (Cecić Erpič et al., 2004). In contrast, those who had not achieved their expected sporting goals expressed a high degree of psychosocial difficulties, such as loneliness, missing people related to their sports, and difficulty in organising their post-sport lives. Also, athletes did not succeed in their sport took a longer period to adjust to post-sport life and had negative evaluations of the adaptation process (Chow, 2001; Koukouris, 1994). Additionally, Sinclair and Orlick (1993) revealed that those who achieved in their sport showed a higher satisfaction in post-sport life.

3.3.4.1.7 Educational status. All eight studies that examined educational status reported positive correlations with the quality of athlete career transition. Athletes reported that their educational progress was negatively influenced by their sporting

career, and low educational attainment was related to vocational difficulties (e.g., difficulties in finding post-sport career, adjustment difficulties to their new career) during the career transition process (Marthinus, 2007; Stonach & Adair, 2010). In addition, athletes' educational and college graduation status influenced both short-term and long-term adjustment to their post sport lives (e.g., Williams, 1991).

3.3.4.1.8 Financial status. Financial status has been reported in eight studies, and all indicated positive associations with the quality of career transition for former athletes. Former athletes experienced financial problems, which caused transition difficulties and limited their post-sport life choices (e.g., Lotysz & Short, 2004; Menkehorst & Van Den Berg, 1997).

3.3.4.1.9 Self-perception. Self-perception incorporated athletes' body image, self-confidence, and self-worth. Eight studies discovered a positive correlation between self-perception and the quality of athlete career transition. Five studies revealed that retirement can influence body image and negative perceptions of one's body can be a source of distress during the career transition process (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavalley & Robinsin, 2007; Sparkes, 1998, Stephan, Bilard, Ninot, & Delignières, 2003a, 2003b; Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007). In addition, findings indicated that athletes' feelings of loss of control over their bodies can be a source of identity crisis during career transition (Sparkes, 1998). Three studies discussed athletes' self-worth and self-confidence (Missler, 1996; Newell, 2005; Stephan et al., 2003a). Missler (1996) suggested that gaining self-worth without sport performance was positively related to former golfers' quality of career transition. Stephan et al. (2003a) reported that the loss of physical capacities was a source of distress and negative emotions for retired athletes during career transition. The same study also indicated that former Olympians showed significantly lower physical self-worth and self-perceived physical strength than active

athletes. Newell (2005) indicated that retired athletes, who had a high self-confidence, also showed a positive perspective on their post-sport career, in terms of self-belief in their abilities to achieve new career goals.

3.3.4.1.10 Control of life. Control of life refers to athletes' perceived autonomy and power over their decisions while competing and during career transition. Seven studies indicated that athletes who had less control over their lives expressed more negative emotions during the transition process than those who had more control (e.g., Kane, 1991; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). College athletes who showed more control over their lives had greater self-esteem, higher life satisfaction, and were more positive about the future (Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). Some athletes attributed their forced retirement and negative emotional experiences during career transition to unbalanced power in their sporting system over which they had no control (Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Parker, 1994).

3.3.4.1.11 Disengagement/drop-out. Koukouris (1991, 1994, 2001) applied the term "disengagement" to examine Greek adolescence and young adult athletes' drop-out experiences, and four other studies (Alfermann, 1995; Alfermann & Gross, 1997; Butt & Molnar, 2009; Johns et al., 1990) have also explored athletes' drop-out experiences. Drop-out refers to premature sport career termination among young athletes before they have reached their full potential (Alfermann, 1995). Findings (Butt & Molnar, 2009; Koukouris, 1994) indicated that athletes who dropped out mostly terminated their sport careers voluntarily but the decision might have been premature and related to lack of control over their situation and decisions (e.g., anticipation of deselection, conflicts with coaches). Feelings of failure, therefore, can be a source of career transition difficulties (Alfermann, 1995; Butt & Molnar, 2009). For this reason, researchers have distinguished the term "drop-out" from the term "retirement" (e.g., Alfermann, 1995;

Wylleman et al., 2004).

Among seven studies examining athletes' disengagement/drop-out, six indicated a negative association between disengagement/drop-out experiences and the quality of career transition, and one showed no association with the quality of career transition. Alfermann (1995) and Alfermann and Gross (1997) reported that some athletes who dropped out from their sport experienced identity problems and negative emotions, and they also used more passive coping strategies than those who experienced retirement from sport. Butt and Molnar (2009) revealed that athletes who dropped out expressed a loss of social networks similar to retired athletes, but they also reported feelings of rejection from former friends who were still in sport teams. Transition difficulties were also observed among disengaged athletes in Koukouris's (2001) study. The study highlighted that athletes' disengagement from sport could lead to social, psychological, and medical difficulties during their post-sport life adjustment. In contrast, Johns et al. (1990) showed that young gymnasts, who dropped out from the sport, perceived their sport career termination in both positive (more time for their friends and hobbies) and negative (needed to be accepted to non-athletic social group) terms, including changes in social relationships and lifestyles.

3.3.4.1.12 Time passed after retirement. Seven studies reported positive associations between length of retirement and former athletes' perception of the quality of their adjustment to post-sport life. Five of those seven studies used a longitudinal design (Douglas & Carless, 2009; Lally, 2007; McKenna & Thomas, 2007; Stephan et al., 2003b; Wippert & Wippert, 2008). Stephan et al. (2003b) found that post-sport life adjustment difficulties reduced as time passed, and in the other studies, the participants started to experience a balance in their lives after 18 months (Douglas & Carless, 2009; McKenna & Thomas, 2007) of their sport career end. Lally (2007) reported that athletes

appeared to have new roles and identities a year after sport career termination. Wippert and Wippert (2008) also revealed that retired athletes' perceived stress levels significantly declined 3 months following the end of their careers compared to after 10 days of retirement.

3.3.4.1.13 Relationship with coach. All six studies that investigated coach-athlete relationships revealed that conflict between the parties could be a source of career transition difficulties. Retired athletes who did not have a good relationship with their coaches expressed more difficulties during the career transition process (Chow, 2001; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Muscat, 2010), and the participants in the studies blamed their coaches for an unsatisfying retirement (Lavalley & Robinson, 2007). The studies also indicated that unbalanced power between coaches and athletes and an unpleasant coach-athlete relationship were associated with injury or disengagement from sport (Johns et al., 1990; Werthner & Orlikck, 1986).

3.3.4.1.14 Life changes. Life changes refer to changes in lifestyles and daily routines (e.g., Stephan et al., 2003a). Five studies indicated that changes in former athletes' lifestyles had negative associations with the quality of career transition. Former athletes reported feelings of anxiety associated with their new routines and feelings of being lost resulting from no more competition and training (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Schwenk, Gorenflo, Dopp, & Hipple, 2007). In addition, adapting to a new lifestyle was one of the transitional difficulties for athletes (Stephan et al., 2003b).

3.3.4.1.15 Balance of life while competing. A total of three studies reported positive correlations between the balance of sporting and non-sporting lives prior to retirement and the quality of career transition. Harrison and Lawrence (2003, 2004) found that student-athletes perceived balancing academic and athletic activities during their sport participation was a significant predictor for post-sport life adjustment. Kerr

and Dacyshyn (2000) revealed that retired gymnasts, who had an adaptive balance between sporting and non-sporting lives during their athletic careers, reported higher life satisfaction after their retirement compared with those who did not have a balanced life while competing.

3.3.4.2 Available resources during the career transition. I examined four correlates in the available resources category with respect to the quality of athletes' career transitions, including coping strategies, pre-retirement planning, psychosocial support, and support programme involvement.

3.3.4.2.1 Coping strategies. Searching for psychosocial support and getting support from others (29 studies; e.g., Barners, 2002; Gilmore, 2008; Lotysz & Short, 2004; Schwenk et al., 2007; Stephan et al., 2003b) have been reported more than other coping strategies among retired athletes. Other coping strategies include searching for new careers or interests (12 studies; e.g., Butt & Molnar, 2009; Clemmet, Hanrahan, & Murray, 2010; Douglas & Carless, 2009; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Shachar et al., 2004), avoidance/denial (six studies; Alferman et al., 2004; Barners, 2002; Grove et al., 1997; Lally, 2007; Stambulova et al., 2007; Weiss, 1992), keeping busy (six studies; Barners, 2002; Brandão, Winterstein, Pinheiro, Agresta, Akel, & Martini, 2001; Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008; Lotysz & Short, 2004; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Winterstein et al., 2001), and acceptance (five studies; Alfermann et al., 2004; Grove et al., 1997; Stambulova, 2001; Tinley, 2002; Weiss, 1992).

A total of 32 studies examined the frequency of coping strategies used during the career transition process and found no clear evidence that certain strategies were more effective than others, except for "searching for new careers or interests." Additionally, studies have shown that finding new careers or interests was positively related to identity shift processing because of role changes following the end of a sport career

(e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007). Six studies reported that athletes employed keeping themselves busy as a way of coping. Furthermore, results from two studies revealed that keeping busy during the career transition period was one of the beneficial coping strategies for athletes to reduce career transition difficulties (Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008; Lotysz & Short, 2004).

Some researchers (e.g., Grove et al., 1997) attempted to investigate associations between certain variables (e.g., athletic identity, nationality) and the use of coping strategies. Grove et al. (1997) reported that higher athletic identity was positively associated with the use of denial, venting emotions, and searching for social support. Alfermann and Gross (1997) discovered that athletes who dropped out from their sports used more passive ways of coping than retired athletes who did not drop out from their sport. Stambulova et al. (2007) found that French former athletes used a denial strategy more than Swedish former athletes. In addition, six studies noted maladaptive coping strategies among retired athletes, such as alcohol dependence, increased smoking, committing suicide, or drug use (Douglas & Carless, 2009; Koukouris, 1991; Mihovilovic, 1968; Schwenk et al., 2007; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Wippert & Wippert, 2008).

3.3.4.2.2 Pre-retirement planning. Pre-retirement planning included attempts to consider vocational, psychological, and financial situations following the end of a sport career before retirement. Twenty nine studies described pre-retirement planning as a variable, and 28 reported it was positively associated with the quality of athlete career transition. Pre-retirement planning was also related to former athletes' vocational adjustment to post-sport life (Coakley, 2006). Planning for post-sport life included psychological preparation before sport career end and having a clear goal outside of sport gave retired athletes a comfortable feeling (e.g., Warriner & Lavallee, 2008;

Young et al., 2006). Additionally, financial planning was one of the influential factors in the quality of athletes' post-sport life adjustment (Fortunato & Marchant, 1999).

3.3.4.2.3 Psychosocial support. Psychosocial support incorporated various kinds of support from non-sporting (e.g., spouses, families, friends, and other significant others) and sporting sources (e.g., coaches, trainers, and teammates). Psychosocial support included emotional, esteem, information, network, and tangible support. Among 29 studies, 27 reported that support from others had a positive influence on the quality of career transition. The results showed that being supported by close others eased transition difficulties during the post-sport adjustment period (Alfermann, 1995; Werthner & Orlick, 1986; Young et al., 2006). Participants in two studies (McKnight, 1996; Schmid & Seiler, 2003) discussed more than one kind of psychosocial support (i.e., emotional, information, and tangible), and seven studies did not specify the kind of support which participants had received from close others.

Among 29 studies, 10 reported the value of emotion and esteem support for athletes' career transitions. Emotion and esteem support included encouragement and help for emotional challenges through storytelling, account-making, and mentoring. Studies revealed that greater amounts of account-making were related to decreases in athletic identity, and completion of account-making procedures was associated with greater overall success in coping with retirement (Barners, 2002; Lavalley et al., 1997). Studies also found that higher mentoring scores were positively associated with intimacy levels among athletes and athletes' demands of mentoring during the career transition process (Lavalley et al., 2000; Perna et al., 1996).

Information support has been examined by four studies and included supportive transition (i.e., providing information prior to a transition; Fernandez et al., 2006; Wippert & Wippert, 2008) and information from organisations, former teammates, and

coaches during the career transition (McKnight, 1996; Stephan et al., 2003b). Fernandez et al. (2006) and Wippert and Wippert (2008) discovered that athletes who had been given pre-retirement information from coaches or trainers before being cut from the team expressed less transition difficulties or negative emotions during the career transition process compared to those who did not get the information. Results from McKnight's (1996) study showed that the recognition of guidance on post-sport life or preparation within organisational policies was positively associated with athletes' career transitions. Participants from Stephan et al. (2003b) perceived teammates' and coaches' support during career transition was helpful for post-sport adjustment.

Six studies reported that social networks played an important role in athletes' career transitions. Studies revealed that a loss of social networks after a sport career termination was one career transition difficulty (e.g., Kane, 1991), and athletes who experienced less difficulty in career transition had a stronger social support network (Schwendener-Holt, 1994).

Tangible support was examined in two studies (Leung et al., 2005; Schmid & Seiler, 2003). Leung et al. (2005) showed that tangible support from national organisations helped to enhance the quality of athletes' career transitions, because athletes who had such opportunities (e.g., funding) experienced a relatively healthier transition than athletes who did not receive organisational support. Schmid and Seiler (2003) revealed that tangible support from athletes' close others was positively related to successful transitions.

3.3.4.2.4 Support programme involvement. Eight studies indicated positive associations between athletes' support programme involvement and their life skills development and the quality of career transition. Albion (2007) and Redmond et al. (2007) found that the ACE programme in Australia helped athletes become less inclined

towards identity foreclosure and increased motivation to make career decisions.

Gilmore (2008) examined Scottish former athletes participating in a performance lifestyle programme and found that they perceived job seeking skills and interview skills development as useful institutional support. Four studies examined college student-athletes' support programme involvement and revealed that the programmes helped them develop life skills, including leadership, decision-making, career planning, and communication skills (Goddard, 2004; Selden, 1997; Stankovich, 1998; Torregrosa Mateos, Sanchez, & Cruz, 2007). Lavallee (2005) revealed that providing Life Development Interventions (LDI; Danish et al., 1992) had a positive influence on athletes' career transition experiences because it helped them to develop appropriate coping skills.

3.4 Discussion

The present study aimed to provide a systematic review of athlete career transition out of sport research. A total of 126 studies met the inclusion criteria. Investigators have used both qualitative and quantitative methods, and the number of studies that have employed longitudinal designs has increased since 1990. Athletes from a wide range of competitive levels, both genders, and various types of sports have been examined. The vast majority of studies were focused on Western samples. The current review identified 19 variables related to the quality of athlete career transition, and the correlates were categorised into two themes: factors related to career transition (e.g., athletic identity, voluntariness of decision, and degree of individual development) and available resources during career transition (e.g., coping strategies, psychosocial support, and pre-retirement planning). The themes are detailed in conceptual models of career transition in sport (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994), and the findings in the current review partially support these models.

Lavallee et al. (2000) reported 80 independent sample studies in their review, and the present review found 126 studies documenting the study area has grown significantly over the past 10 years. The current review also revealed that the number of studies conducted via qualitative methods (44% compared with 29% reported by Lavallee et al., 2000), with female athletes (19%, compared with 11% in 2000), and with participants from non-Western regions (9 studies compared with no studies in 2000) have increased gradually over the past decade. These results reveal a diversification of the methodologies used and a broadening of sample populations in the study area.

Reviewing existing studies from the early stages up to 2010 made it possible to examine changes in research trends. As Wylleman et al. (2004) highlighted, in the early stages of investigation, researchers focused on the causes and consequences of athletes' retirement and then moved on to identify predictors of the quality of athlete career transition. More recently, researchers have also refined well-known variables (e.g., athletic identity) and examined a broader range of correlates. For example, negative aspects of body image have long been considered as a consequence of sport termination (e.g., Wheeler et al., 1996), but positive correlations between negative body image and transitional distress have been identified in recent studies (e.g., Stephan et al., 2003a, 2003b). As regards athletic identity, a number of previous studies (e.g., Sparkes, 1998) discussed athletes' identity shift after leaving their sport, but a more recent longitudinal study (Lally, 2007) revealed that athletes experience decreases in athletic identity in the latter stages of their sport career, not just after actually retiring. These findings from longitudinal studies (Lally, 2007; Stephan et al, 2003a) have documented detailed changes in athletes' perceptions and attitudes through the career transition process, including the latter stages of their sport careers and post-retirement. They have also

made recommendations for how to support athletes, not just in terms of the kind of support they need, but also when this support should be provided.

As another example, although previous literature has highlighted the role of social support in athletes' career transition experiences (e.g., Baillie & Danish, 1992), past reviewers have typically not stratified research according to specific kinds of support. Social support is conceptualised in many different ways across psychology. Recently, in sport and performance psychology, Murphy (2009) introduced five types of social support (i.e., emotional, esteem, information, network, and tangible), which help interpret existing data to a depth not previously achieved. Some researchers (e.g., Cutrona & Russell, 1990) have claimed that certain forms of social support (e.g., tangible, emotional) may have more beneficial effects on specific kinds of stress (e.g., losses, transitions) than others. Identifying types of social support and examining the forms of support athletes received during the career transition out of sport may help practitioners design appropriate social support-based interventions.

The present review partially supports Taylor & Ogilvie's (1994) conceptual model of adaptation to career transition by suggesting that the correlates fit into two categories rather than three in the model. The model presents reasons for career transition, factors related to how athletes adapt to career transition, and available resources during the career transition as three influential predictors of the quality of the career transition process. The model also suggests types of interventions for when athletes experience difficulties. In the current review, however, reasons for career transition were integrated into factors related to the quality of career transition, and the results provide data to justify expanding the existing model by identifying additional predictors and more refined variables. For example, reasons for career termination may be influenced by timing or the decision-making processes, such as pre-mature career termination (e.g.,

disengagement, drop-out) or voluntariness or involuntariness of career transition (e.g., self-choice, forced retirement). Moreover, interpersonal issues (e.g., coach-athlete relationships, parental involvement) were considered as predictors of the quality of career transition and pro-active interventions should be provided to active and retiring athletes. Overall, the findings from the current systematic review indicated that athletes' career transition process could be more complicated than what models and theories suggested, which includes pre-transition process, and divided into various types of transitions rather than voluntariness or involuntariness of transition.

This review has several limitations. Only English language studies were included; during the search process four foreign-language studies (two Chinese [Liu & Li, 2007; Wang, 2008] and two Korean [Chung, 2010; Hong, 2010]) were excluded. The exclusion of these non-English studies might influence sample characteristics (e.g., location of study) and lead to the omission of potential correlates, such as cultural or sporting system related issues. Finally, the review could not present all examined correlates individually, due to limited space. In line with previous and accepted guidelines (Goodger et al., 2007; Sallis et al., 2000), correlates with less than three individual studies were either grouped into similar predictors during the analysis process or dropped from the summary table (e.g., having positive role models, parents' involvement in decision). Providing categories with conceptually similar variables might lead to more robust results for the review, in terms of suggesting directions for examining similar correlates.

Based on previous findings, several future research directions can be identified. There has been a growing body of interest on the development of conceptual models in athletes' career transitions, but these models have not been systematically tested. Only two studies, for example, examined Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) model (Coakley, 2006;

Munroe et al., 1999), and one study developed theories through the grounded theory method (Torregrosa, Boixadós, Valiente, & Cruz, 2004). Testing available models and developing sport specific theoretical frameworks might help researchers to clarify the conceptualisation of athletes' career transition out of sport, and would allow practitioners to develop theory based implications.

In terms of research design, the majority of investigators have employed retrospective data collection methods, and many of them have noted memory and recall bias as a limitation (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007). Employing prospective longitudinal research designs to study athletes' career transitions might allow researchers to overcome limitations with retrospective designs as well as examine the dynamic processes over time more prospective longitudinal studies are needed in the study area.

Nearly half of the studies used a qualitative research method, and most researches employed individual interviews for data collection and thematic analysis of transcripts. Investigators analysed data in different ways, including interpretative phenomenological analysis (e. g., Warriner & Lavalley, 2008) and narrative analysis (e.g., Gearing, 1999), yet there are more ways to explore athletes' career transition phenomenon from a qualitative perspective (e.g., action research). Various types of research designs provide different methodological advantages and allow researcher to answer various research questions, and answering a range of different questions helps researchers to develop the breadth and depth of the knowledge base. I recommend future researchers build upon this research by employing diverse methods, including focus groups, case studies, and action research methods.

Several investigators (e.g., Cecić Erpič, 2000; Lavalley & Wylleman, 1999) have developed measurement tools to investigate athletes' career transitions, but these

available questionnaires have not been validated with a range of samples. Further validation research of the questionnaires may assess their utility in athlete populations.

The results from the present review showed that there are many variables, which are related to the quality of athlete career transition. Since findings revealed that coach-athlete relationships (e.g., Chow, 2001; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007) and athletes' physical health (e.g., Gilmore, 2008) were positively associated with the quality of athlete career transition, employing relevant issues from other study areas (e.g., burnout, coach-athlete relationships, and injury) may help to explain the multidimensional aspect of the career transition process.

Although several studies have examined a large range of demographic variables, such as gender, age, types of sport, and marital status, no consistent evidence has been found except for a positive association between marital, social, educational, and financial status and the quality of career transition (e.g., Lotysz & Short, 2004; Marthinus, 2007). As Stambulova et al. (2009) noted, athletes' career transition studies have been conducted mainly in European countries, North America, and Australia. Findings from the current review confirmed this trend and revealed that eight out of nine studies from non-Western countries (i.e., Africa, Asia, Middle East and South America) were conducted between 2001 and 2007. I agree with Stambulova and Alfermann (2009), who have called for more cultural studies in the career transition area, specifically investigating the influence of sport systems and environmental contexts on the quality of athletes' career transitions. Moreover, as several researchers (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002; Si & Lee, 2007) have suggested, investigating cultural similarities and differences could assist in testing the generality and validity of existing knowledge and theories and lead to practical implications, such as providing suitable and appropriate support in applied work.

Few studies mentioned the influence of the decision making-process for post-sport life adjustment (e.g., Cecić Erpič, 2007b; Kirby, 1986; McPherson, 1980). Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) indicated that the sport career termination decision-making process is multifaceted and complex. Athletes' sport career termination decision-making processes usually occur over an extended period of time (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000) and are considered different from retirement itself (Kirby, 1986). Recently, investigators have tried to specify aspects of the decision-making process, both athletic and non-athletic elements that lead to sport career termination (Cecić Erpič et al., 2004). Investigators have also examined the (anti-) pull or (anti-) push factors related to sport career retirement decision-making (Fernandez et al., 2006). Cecić Erpič et al. (2004) reported that non-athletic factors (e.g. graduation, marriage) influenced the overall quality of the career transition out of sport. According to Fernandez et al. (2006), a better understanding of the retirement decision-making process is useful for applied work, when practitioners assist athletes who are planning for post-sport life.

Numerous authors (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) have discussed intervention strategies to support athletes' career transitions. However, only one published study (Lavalley, 2005), three published conference proceedings (Albion, 2007; Redmond et al., 2007; Torregrosa et al., 2007), and four dissertations (Gilmore, 2008; Goddard, 2004; Selden, 1997; Stankovich, 1998) have tested the effectiveness of a specific intervention strategy or programme for supporting athletes' career transition out of sport. In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of interventions, further research is required to assess whether specific psychological interventions can assist practitioners in supporting athletes in transitions. For example, although researchers have frequently examined coping strategies employed by athletes during the career transition process,

no study has been conducted on how sport psychologists can support athletes in developing effective coping strategies.

No previous reviewer has divided the voluntariness of the retirement decision and disengagement/drop-out factors into different categories. However, the current review supports the suggestion by Wylleman et al. (2004) to separate the two factors, and examine the differences in the processes between athletes' voluntariness of retirement decisions and disengagement/drop-out issues. The processes involved in disengagement and dropping-out from sport participation are non-normative and occur without individuals' intention, but they are still different from forced retirement. Disengagement and drop-out processes are not as uncontrollable as forced sport career termination, because athletes often have a choice to continue or stop their sports career (Alfermann & Gross, 1997; Piffaretti, Schnyder, Mahler, Barbat, & Keller, 2003). In addition, findings have suggested that disengagement/drop-out can be related to burnout (Smith, 1986). Research examining disengagement/drop-out and forced retirement might extend knowledge on outcomes of specific transitions.

3.5 Conclusion

Findings from the current review contributed to the overall thesis by providing detailed information on athletes' career transitions research and identifying research that could fill the gaps in the study area. Based on the current review findings, the following study for the thesis was designed, which is a longitudinal examination of Korean tennis players' retirement experiences. Researchers (Lavalley & Robinson, 2007) suggested the merits of employing longitudinal methods because athlete career transition is considered a process rather than an event. In addition, although researchers (e.g., Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009) have discussed the need to examine cultural influences on athletes' career transition, studies are rare in Korea and other Asian countries.

Chapter Four

Study 2: A Longitudinal Qualitative Exploration of Elite Korean Tennis Players' Career Transition Experiences

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter (Study 1) identified the current status and limitations of athlete career transition studies. Researchers have revealed that a large number of retired athletes have experienced adjustment difficulties during and after their career transitions (Lavallee et al., 2000). Other investigators, however, have discovered that some former athletes have had a smooth career transition to post-sport life and have experienced minimal difficulties (e.g., Torregrosa et al., 2003). The findings indicated that athletic identity, the voluntariness of the retirement, individuals' life skills development, pre-retirement planning, and coping strategies are key predictors for the quality of athletes' career transition adjustment (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Lally, 2007).

Recently, several researchers (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009) have claimed the influence of cultural diversity or the environmental sport context on athletes' career transition. They have emphasized the need to involve culture and sport system-based variables in the study area. As revealed in Study 1, the majority of the studies have been conducted in North America, Europe, and Australia, and studies on athletes' career transition are rare in Korea and other Asian countries. Examining Korean athletes' career transition experiences might be helpful in expanding knowledge into different cultural backgrounds and testing the generality and validity of existing knowledge and theories in other cultural contexts (Si & Lee, 2007).

The current study emerged based on the findings from Study 1 and existing literature. The present study focused on professional and semi-professional Korean tennis players' career transition experiences and employed a qualitative longitudinal research approach. In the area of retirement from sport, researchers have mainly employed retrospective data collection because of difficulties in predicting athletes'

retirement timing. Many researchers (e.g. Lally, 2007) have highlighted the limitations of retrospective design in terms of possible decay in participants' memories and recall bias. In addition, career transition has been widely acknowledged as a process rather than a singular event, and the need to discover athletes' cognitive and behavioural changes over time has been discussed (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). Researchers (e.g. Lally, 2007; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007) have suggested that longitudinal research methods are appropriate for exploring the athlete career transition process, because the design allows investigators to seek athletes' transitional experiences in real time.

Since the current study focused on Korean tennis players' career transition experiences, it might be helpful to explain the relatively uncommon semi-professional Korean sport context. In Korea, there are two different types of elite level tennis players: professional and semi-professional. The professional athletes play international tennis tournaments, such as those on the ATP (Association Tennis Professionals) or WTA (Women's Tennis Association) tours. Two major companies support these players, and only a few Korean athletes (usually fewer than 10 players at the same time) have a chance to become a professional tennis player. Semi-professionals mainly play the domestic league and compete in just a few international tournaments each year. They belong to and play for certain teams (companies). Some of the semi-professional teams hire athletes as regular employees. In that case, athletes can work at the company after they terminate their sport career, which means they have secure jobs after their retirement from sport. The semi-professional system in the Korean tennis context is more similar to the professional contexts of most other countries than their semi-professional systems, because during their sporting lifetime semi-professional athletes in Korea only play sport for their teams, and are not involved in office work. Other semi-professional teams have a short-term contract with players, and athletes are not

considered employees of the company. Players who have a short-term contract with semi-professional tennis teams and professional players need to find a post-sport career when they retire from their sport. Since previous research has revealed that finding post-sport career is one of the main sources of athletes' career transition difficulties (e.g., Lotysz & Short, 2004), the unique Korean sport context might influence the experience of the current participants in ways different to those similar athletes in other countries.

The purpose of the current study was to understand Korean tennis players' career transition out of sport experiences by focusing on psychological factors (e.g., self-identity, psychological status) and socio-cultural influences over a period of time, including the pre-retirement period and post-sport life adjustment (i.e., 2 to 3 months before retirement and within 1 month, 6 months, and 12 months after retirement).

4.2 Method

The study employed a qualitative longitudinal research design to explore participants' career transition processes in depth. According to Patton (2002), qualitative inquiry generally helps researchers produce rich and detailed information from a small number of participants and aims to collect information about certain cases or situations rather than generalized findings. The participants in the present study were selected purposively based on Smith et al.'s (2009) sampling strategies. Smith et al. suggested that researchers need to select participants with representative perspectives on particular phenomena who are fairly homogeneous to focus on detailed account of participants' experiences. To select information-rich cases who can offer an insight into a particular experience, the participants for the current study were selected on the basis of two criteria. First, participants had to be either professional or semi-professional tennis players in Korea, and second, they had to be considering retiring from their sport.

4.2.1 Participants

The participants in the present study were full-time Korean elite-level athletes, including one female professional tennis player and two male and two female semi-professional tennis players. The players were aged between 24 and 36 (*Mean age* = 29.8, *SD* = 5.54), had been playing tennis for an average of 20 years (*SD* = 5), and had spent an average of 10.6 years (*SD* = 3.78) as either professional or semi-professional athletes. Participants' profiles are presented below. Pseudonyms have been used to protect confidentiality.

Alex was a semi-professional player. He was 35 years old at his first interview and was George's (see below) doubles partner. He had played tennis for 25 years and had spent 13 years in the semi-professional league. His highest world ranking was 587. He decided to retire voluntarily on the grounds of injury and age. After his first interview, his team wanted him to play for another year, and he decided to stay in the team. Alex retired after the third interview and took a bank assistant's position in his former company. He was married and had two children.

Christina was a semi-professional player who was 24 years old at the time of her first interview. She had played tennis for 15 years and had spent 6 years in the semi-professional league. Her world ranking was around 600. She decided to retire voluntarily, and her reason was underperformance. Christina took a job with her company and became a bank teller after her retirement.

George (Alex's partner) was a semi-professional player, was 36 years of age, and was the oldest player in his league. He had played tennis for 25 years and had been in the semi-professional league for 14 years. His best world ranking was 484. He decided to retire voluntarily, and his reasons were age and starting a new career. After the first interview, he decided to play for another year, because of his attachment to tennis and

his team's need for more players for competitions. George became a bank assistant, which was provided by his tennis team company. He was married and had two children.

Isobel was a semi-professional player. She was 25 years old at the time of her first interview and had played tennis for 15 years. She had played in the semi-professional league for 7 years. Her highest world ranking was 421. Although she decided to retire because of injury, she perceived her retirement decision as a voluntary one, because she could play if she really wanted to. After the first interview, she decided to stay in her team for a year, because her team wanted her to continue for another year. Her actual retirement occurred 3 months after her third interview, and she took a bank teller job provided by her previous tennis team.

Meredith was a professional tennis player, was 29 years old at the start of the study, had played tennis for 20 years, and had played 13 years on the professional tour (WTA). Her highest world ranking was 45. Although her reason for retirement was injury, she claimed that she had made her retirement decision voluntarily, because she could continue to play longer if she wanted. Meredith became a coach after her sport career ended.

Overall, the participants postponed their retirement for between 1 and 3 years. Two of them retired from their sport 3 months after their first interviews, and the other three participants postponed their retirement for a year and retired 3 months after their third interviews.

4.2.2 Interview Guide

The interview guides, based on previous literature on athletes' retirement from sport (Brewer & Cornelius, 2001; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) and Patton's (2002) guidelines of question design, were developed (Appendix B). The first version of the interview guides was piloted with two Korean former (semi-) professional tennis

players and was refined based on the pilot interviews. The interview guide for the first interview contained several main discussion topics, including demographic questions, individuals' sport careers, athletic identity, reasons for retirement, psychological and emotional experiences, and coping strategies. Later interview guides were modified based on participants' responses to help me follow the athletes' stories, but similar major topics (e.g., identity, psychological experiences, and coping strategies) were common to all interviews.

4.2.3 Procedure

In a sport setting, predicting the timing of athletes' retirement is difficult, because typically they do not consider their retirement until it is imminent (e.g., Torregrosa et al., 2004). To identify potential participants I utilised snowball sampling (Smith et al., 2009). Sampling begins by speaking to people who know key informants and contacting potential participants through referrals from various informants (e.g., Clare, 2002; Smith et al., 2009). To select information-rich participants for the current study, I contacted two Korean national tennis team coaches and obtained the contact details of athletes who intended to terminate their sport careers. I contacted six potential participants via phone; five of them agreed to participate in the current study but the sixth decided not to participate, because she was unsure whether she was going to retire or not within the study's time frame.

I got approval from the University's ethics committee before data collection began. All participants were informed about the study, including the purpose, ethical considerations, and the benefits and risks of taking part. Individuals signed consent agreement forms before their first interview (Appendix A). Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone owing to geographical limitations. Each participant had at least one face-to-face interview (Table 4.1). Although face-to-face

interviews were preferred, some previous findings (e.g., Bermack, 1989; Herzog & Rodgers, 1988) have indicated no differences in self-disclosure between face-to-face and telephone interviews. The location, date, and time of the interviews were scheduled according to participants' preferences.

Table 4. 1.
Timetable for Interviews

	The first interview	The second interview	The third interview	The fourth interview	The fifth interview
Interviews with participants who retired as planned	1 to 3 months before retirement	Within a month of retirement	Within 5 to 6 months after retirement	Within 11 to 12 months after retirement	
Meredith	Interview 1 Phone	Interview 2 Face-to-face	Interview 3 Phone	Interview 4 Phone	
Christina	Interview 1 Phone	Interview 2 Face-to-face	Interview 3 Phone	Interview 4 Phone	
Interviews with participants who postponed their retirement	1 to 3 months before intended retirement	1 to 2 months after postponement decision	1 to 3 months before actual retirement	Within a month of retirement	Within 5 to 6 months after retirement
Isobel	Interview 1 Phone	Interview 2 Face-to-face	Interview 3 Face-to-face	Interview 4 Phone	Interview 5 Phone
George	Interview 1 Phone	Interview 2 Face-to-face	Interview 3 Face-to-face	Interview 4 Phone	Interview 5 Phone
Alex	Interview 1 Phone	Interview 2 Face-to-face	Interview 3 Face-to-face	Interview 4 Phone	Interview 5 Phone

Before the first interview with each participant, I scheduled four interviews with them, including between 2 and 3 months before their retirement, within 1 month, between 5 and 6, and between 11 and 12 months after retirement. However, some changes had to be made with regard to the timing of several participants' retirement (Table 4.1).

A total of 23 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the five participants over 20 months. Christina and Meredith, who retired as they had initially planned, participated in four interviews, which were conducted between 2 and 3 months before their retirement, within 1 month, between 5 and 6 months, and between 11 and 12 months after their retirement. The other three participants (i.e., Alex, George, and

Isobel) also had their first interviews between 2 and 3 months before their intended retirement, but a few weeks after these interviews, they decided to postpone their retirement from tennis for a year. The second set of interviews with these three athletes was conducted as scheduled, which was 3 months after the first interview, and the interviews were focused on their decisions to postpone their retirement. The third interviews with the continuing participants took place a year after the first interview, which was again between 2 and 3 months before their retirement. All three athletes who postponed their retirement terminated their sport careers 3 months after the third interviews. All three of them had their fourth interviews within 1 month after retirement, and the final interviews were conducted between 5 and 6 months after their sport career ended.

The timing of the first interview with the respondents, which was between 2 and 3 months before their intended retirement from sport, was chosen for the purpose of examining athletes' reactions to their retirement decisions and their attitudes toward retirement in the final stages of their sport careers. More specifically, the purpose of the first interview was identifying participants' reasons for retirement and their psychological experiences of the pre-retirement process, including any changes in identity, psychological status and emotional response, and coping strategies used.

The second round of data collection was planned within a month of the participants' retirement. In the second interview, I intended to discuss how athletes perceived or dealt with their sport careers termination soon after they had retired, including any identity shifts, emotional and psychological experiences, and their use of coping skills. Three respondents who postponed their retirement (i.e., Alex, George, and Isobel) after the first interview, within 1 months of the retirement interview was the fourth ones for them because they had three interviews (3 months before the first

intended retirement, 2 months after postponement decision, and 3 months before their actual retirement) before their retirement.

The third interview was scheduled to take place between 5 and 6 months after participants' sport careers had ended. In the third interview, I aimed to examine (a) the athletes' life changes and their adjustment to post-sport life, (b) psychological factors, such as identity shift, emotional and psychological responses, (c) changes in social networks, and (d) coping strategies. The period of time between 5 and 6 months after their actual retirement was chosen on the basis of previous research findings indicating that athletes took 6 months or longer to adjust to their post-sport lives (e.g., Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stephan et al., 2003). Additionally, the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984) indicates that when individuals experience life changes, it takes a minimum of 6 months to reach the maintenance stage, which refers to the adaption of new life routines or changes as results of life changes or events. In addition, three participants who postponed their retirement had five interviews each, but they had three interviews before their actual retirement, one within one month of their retirement, and their last interview was between 5 and 6 months after retirement.

The last interview with the two respondents who had retired after their first interviews (i.e., Christina and Meredith) was held a year after their retirement. In the final interview, I tried to expand on the views expressed in their third interviews, including the degree of adjustment and their perceptions of new life experiences.

4.2.4 Analysis

The total time for the interviews was 1,653 minutes, and they ranged between 35 and 98 minutes, with an average of 72 minutes. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The total time taken to transcribe the interviews was 80 hours and 28 minutes, and the words totalled 136,333 (in the English version). The original

transcribed versions (Korean) were translated into English, and the copies of the original (Korean) and English manuscripts were sent to another expert to check the credibility of the translation work.

To gain an understanding of athletes' career transition experiences, data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Smith, Jarman, and Osborn (1999) outlined IPA, which is based on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography. IPA focuses on the detailed examination of individuals' experiences at a particular moment or during a significant event (Smith et al., 2009).

The process of the analysis for the current study included five different steps based on Smith et al.'s (2009) suggestions. In line with the principles of IPA, each individual's response was analysed as a single case, and they were put together in the final stages of the analysis to allow comparison across cases. To conduct IPA, researchers are required to immerse themselves in the original data, so the first step of the analysis was reading and re-reading the data while listening to the audio-recording to gain an in-depth understanding of the original data. The second step aimed to explore participants' semantic content and language use in the transcripts. In the second stage, I tried to understand participants' emotional responses, use of language through descriptive notes (describing the context of what participants said), linguistic exploratory notes (specific use of language), and interpreting original data with conceptual coding (explaining interrogative data to conceptual level; Smith et al., 2009). The interpretation (e.g., making sense of findings and offering explanations) in the present data analysis was based on the literature (e.g., Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Lally, 2007; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). In the third step, I developed emergent themes by reducing the details of the data, including finding interrelationships, connections and patterns between the initial notes from previous stages. The fourth step,

which was the last step for the single case analysis, aimed to produce super-ordinate themes, which refer to the most representative aspects of the participants' accounts based on the research questions via charting and mapping of the emergent themes. The final step of the analysis was searching for patterns across cases, including finding representative themes and connections or differences across the cases.

4.2.5 Research Credibility

To establish research credibility, I used three kinds of triangulation, *member checking*, *theory triangulation*, and *analyst triangulation* (Patten, 2002). In member checking, every time participants had an interview, they had an opportunity to review their own responses because they received a copy of their transcripts and results. All five participants confirmed that they checked the documents each time. For the interpretation, which is an essential part of IPA, I used theory triangulation, which means using various theoretical frameworks (e.g., Danish et al., 1995; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) to analyse the same data. Finally, during the data analysis, I had regular meetings with two other individuals knowledgeable about the study area to ensure findings were based on the original data. In addition, one of the researchers audited the data trial after the analysis to ensure that the analysis process had been undertaken properly, and the interpretation and results were credible and based on the original data.

4.3 Results

Data analysis resulted in the following three super-ordinate themes: (a) sense of self, others, and the process of identity shift; (b) available resources during the career transition process; and (c) decision-making during the process and consequences of decisions (Table 4.2). Each of the super-ordinate themes is presented with sub-themes, which refer to participants' career transition experiences within the contexts.

Table 4. 2.
Super-ordinate Themes

Sense of self, others, and process of identity shift

Sense of self

- Athletic identity
- Social identity
- Comparison
- Identity confusion

Tendency of identity shift

- Decrease in athletic identity
- Changes in focus
- New interest
- New goals
- Changes in priority
- New self

Sense of others

- Others' influence on sense of self
- Others' influence on identity shift

Available resources during the career transition process

Perceived individual development and resources

- Lack of life skill development
- Lack of social experiences
- Lack of preparation
- Lack of organisational support
- Lack of support network
- Lack of coping skills
- Coaches' influence on individual development during athletic career
- Parents' influence on individual development during athletic career
- Transferable skills
- Perceived a high degree of social support

Coping strategies

- Social support
- Problem-focused coping
- Emotional-focused coping

Decision-making during the process and consequences of decisions

Influential factors on the career transition decision

- Reasons for retirement
- Personal influences
- Athletic identity
- Readiness for retirement
- Emotional influences
- Having secure post-sport career
- Generativity

Perceived control

- Perceived control during athletic career
- Perceived control during the decision-making process
- Increased control over life after retirement

Psychological experiences during the decision-making process

- Difficulties in making decision
- Ambiguous of voluntariness of the decision

Psychological consequences of the decision

- Positive emotional responses
- Negative emotional responses

4.3.1 Sense of Self, Others, and the Process of Identity Shift

Across the interviews participants discussed their sense of self, and how their sense of self as an athlete influenced and was influenced by the career transition process. During the career transition process, participants showed identity confusion and reformation. These changes in participants' sense of self tended to be influenced by changes in their goals, lifestyles, and social networks during the career transition process.

Like Brewer et al., (2000) the findings from the present study showed reciprocal interactions between athletic identity and career transitions. For example, their athletic identity influenced athletes' retirement decisions and post-sport career choices, and the career transition process also had an effect on their identities. In addition, athletes' sense of self during the career transition process interacted with other people's perceptions and attitudes toward them, and participants compared themselves with other people to evaluate and explain themselves.

The sub-themes were: (a) athletes' sporting experiences influenced the development of their athletic identity, and their sense of self influenced on their decisions during the career transition process; (b) athletes experienced identity reformation during the career transition process, and identity confusion occurred as a result of loss of sporting social sub-groups and roles; and (c) athletes' sense of self and their sense of how others perceived them were interdependent.

4.3.1.1 Athletes' sporting experiences influenced the development of their athletic identity, and their sense of self influenced on their decisions during the career transition process. All participants discussed the influence of their athletic experiences on their sense of self. The respondents talked about their lifestyles as athletes, which they perceived as different from non-athletic lifestyles, such as living in

a team dormitory and frequent travelling for competitions. Meredith said, “I just played tennis hard...all of my off-court life also focused on tennis. Tennis was in the centre of my whole life...I had to go travelling abroad 7 to 8 months in a year, and [I was] always alone...” They also described their coaches’ influence and the influence of their athletic experiences on the development of their self-identity and social identity during their athletic careers. Participants showed a strong athletic identity before their actual retirement, which was a result of their athletic experiences. Some of them tended to have ‘identity foreclosure’, which refers to when individuals make commitments to roles without engaging in exploratory behaviour (Marcia et al., 1993), during their athletic career. Isobel said, “I’m thinking I’m a 100% pure athlete...tennis is important...if I can’t play tennis well, whole my life becomes negative...whole my life goes downhill. I know it’s not good, but I can’t control it”. After the above interview, Isobel decided to extend her tennis career for a year and showed a strong athletic identity until the end of her sport career. Her identity shift, however, and identity reformation occurred soon after she started her new career, and this is illustrated below when discussing participants’ identity reformation (p. 104).

Respondents also described about how their athletic experiences and coaches influenced their social networks. Most participants had small social networks within their tennis circle, and they were aware of the narrowness of their social experiences. Christina said, “[My] friends are almost all athletes”. Meredith also talked about her coach’s influence on her social life and the difficulties that she had because of a lack of social experiences:

...my coach banned me to meet my friend and hang around with them, because of that, I think my personality seems to be changed...just this small tennis world... [in which] I have lived. When I moved to [the] other [non-

sporting] world, I experienced really uncomfortable feelings...

In the above, Meredith did not simply discuss her coach's influence on her self-development and social life, but also interpreted how she felt when with not-athletic social groups because of her lack of social experiences. Three out of the five current respondents discussed how their coaches encouraged them to focus on their athletic roles and careers rather than have other interests outside sport. Meredith said, "...I gave up friends and family...I never cared about family well because of tennis...only tennis was in the centre of my life...whole my life...indirectly my coach did [encouraged me to do that]".

Three of the five participants reported concerns about leaving their social sub-groups as a result of retirement, and their anxieties about facing a new social life. Christina showed concern about her small social network 3 months before her retirement, "... I have been always stayed with the people I meet every day and have lived in here [her team dormitory] confined, but I am going to meet someone I never know...I'm afraid". In the post-retirement interviews, all five respondents reported a loss of social networks, and three of them expressed difficulties in building new social networks after retirement, which is discussed in life change section (4.3.3.3).

According to Erikson (1968), individuals' self-identities have a strong social aspect and their identity development is embedded in the social environment. Respondents in the present study distinguished the sport world and the non-sport world as two different worlds. Alex said 3 months before his retirement:

...from now I have to step into another world. It's a totally different world, I need to adapt to that...I just play tennis for over 20 years...and now there is the world I never have experienced in front of me after I retire. Somehow, I'm afraid...I really am afraid of it...

In addition, while Alex was talking about his perception of two different worlds, he also revealed his fear of entering the new world, because it was a different world for him from the sporting one in which he used to live. When actual retirement occurred, and participants started to live post-sport lives, they seemed to overcome their fears with time. Isobel said, “I am now out here, real world...I feel like I am bit more grown, and I can see how things are going”.

The results revealed that participants’ athletic identity influenced their decisions throughout the retirement process, including the timing of their actual retirement, pre-retirement planning, and post-sport career choice. A strong athletic identity was a source of a high degree of attachment to sport during the retirement decision-making process. Their attachment to sport was a source of difficulties in making decisions and the postponement of retirement. Isobel talked about her postponement decision at the second interview:

I like my sport...I have been doing this for 10 years. It wasn’t easy for me to make the retirement decision...I have been devoted to my sport for [my] entire life, but thinking of quitting, it wasn’t realistic for me, and [I] had a lot of attachment...I still have attachment to my sport...

When Meredith had to face her retirement decision, she expressed strong feelings of existential concerns about the meaninglessness in her life because of the loss of her sporting goals, roles, and athletic self, which had been part of her life for 20 years. She said after her retirement decision, which was 3 months before her retirement:

My life disappears, and it might be a hard time for me, I played tennis, I did well, and I went to some high ranking, but all those things are useless...when I terminate my sport life, it seems the end of all those things too, there is no meaning...I just play tennis, it seems not really successful and also not very

good, only I injured my body and hurt my feelings...

Meredith also expressed her negative emotions through the early stages of the career transition process, in terms of difficulties in letting her sport go and facing a new life.

She said:

During the retirement process, I had really hard time. I can say that, I had something is similar to depression. I had even thought something I shouldn't think of. "Why should I live?"...my future was unclear. I really had hard time because of that.

The above examples show that athletes may have negative emotions when they confront their retirement decision and indicate that career transition difficulties occur during their retirement decision-making process prior to actual retirement.

Although four of the five respondents became office workers, during the early stages of their retirement process, four participants intended to become coaches, and these thoughts tended to be related to their strong athletic identities and fears of entering new lives. Isobel said before her postponement decision:

...even if I retire from tennis, it doesn't mean I'm not connected to tennis anymore, and I can still stay here...my dad really wants me to coach young players. I like it...I agree with the idea and want to do that...there are two paths I can go, I can just have a normal life [becoming a bank-teller] or become a tennis coach, I'm still considering...

Isobel decided to take a bank-telling position provided by her tennis team company after her retirement, because she believed that she could become a coach any time she felt ready, but she would not have a second chance of an office job once she left her team. Athletes' career choices also related to their fears of entering new lives. Meredith, who became a coach, confided how she felt when

she thought about having a career outside her sport and admitted that the fear of facing a new life was one reason she decided to remain involved with tennis:

...I have never tried anything other than tennis...I feel afraid, because I never have done anything by myself...nowadays, I have to do all the things by myself, and I am afraid of it. So when I was in the decision-making process, I had a fear to face [something] other than tennis.

4.3.1.2 Athletes experienced identity reformation during the career transition process, and identity confusion occurred as a result of loss of sporting social sub-groups and roles. The participants showed strong athletic identities in the early stages of their career transition. Meredith, for example, talked about her focus 3 months before her retirement, “Even now [after retirement decision was made], I’m just thinking of tennis. 100%. I mean every day in my life”. Some of the other participants in the present study showed a decrease in athletic identity in the early stages of their career transition, such as during the decision-making process or the latter stages of their sport career. Christina talked about her sense of self after she made her retirement decision, “...now, I feel less like a competitor more likely an amateur who plays tennis for fun...”

When discussing their identity shifts, participants discussed confusion over their identities, and it tended to relate to the loss of athletic roles and previous social belonging networks. Isobel mentioned her status as “staying in the middle” right after her retirement. She said:

I am just in the middle. I can’t say I left [my team] completely, but also I am officially retired from my sport. I am done as an athlete, but I haven’t started new life yet. I am in the middle.

Meredith, who became a coach after her retirement, explained how she felt about her sense of self within 1 month of her actual retirement. “I ended my player’s career,

and I'm a coach. Now I'm not a player Meredith, but a Lexie's coach. I mean, it's not me..." Meredith's comment revealed her confusion as a result of her sport career end, and she did not feel comfortable with her new position or new self, which Erikson (1950) highlighted as a sign of identity crisis or confusion. Christina reported a loss of contact with friends and experienced difficulties in building new social networks. She seemed to experience identity confusion. She said:

I never really felt lonely, but now I feel lonely when I'm alone...I feel I have no one around me. I just think "Who am I? What am I doing here?"
Yes. I sometimes feel like this when I feel lonely...

Again, the above example indicates the effect of social networks and one's social identity on the sense of self. When she lost her former social networks Christina suddenly started asking herself "Who am I?" and also asking the question "Where do I belong to?"

Although respondents showed identity confusion in the initial stages of their identity reformation, over time they displayed acceptance of their new ways of being and new sense of self. Participants built a new identity based on changes in their roles, values, focuses, and lifestyles, and identity reformation was found to be salient after they engaged with new roles and new careers. Meredith said 5 months after her retirement:

...my life also has changed. I became more autonomous. I had lived in a small, but all provided world, and only thing I needed to do was playing tennis, but now I left that world, and I became someone who should provide something to others...I'm thinking I'm a coach much more than the last interview. I feel comfortable with this. I don't really feel as confused as the last time.

The results indicated that participants' identity reformation occurred both naturally and as a result of a conscious focus. Alex showed a conscious focus on building a new identity. He said 5 months after retirement:

I think I see myself as an office worker rather than a tennis man. That makes me feel better. It makes me feel easier to adjust to current life rather than thinking of sport...everything is focusing on this [new career] now...I should let my sport go soon as possible, then it helps me to adjust to my current life better...

4.3.1.3 Athletes' sense of self and how others perceived them were

interdependent. Participants' sense of self interacted with how they believed other people perceived them and attitudes toward their retirement. Through the career transition process, the participants' sense of self tended to correspond with other people's views and attitudes about them, and participants seemed to accept others' changes in attitudes toward their retirement. Christina said 3 months before her retirement:

...all my surroundings know that I'm going to retire, so they often ask me "When are you going to stop?"...they ask me "Where are you going to live after?" Rather than my goal in tennis...all topics have changed...it's not too bad [to hear this]. I just think that it's time to leave.

After she made her retirement decision, Christina was aware of changes in other people's attitude toward her sport career, which was no longer the focus of their attention, but the comment also shows her own thoughts about others' changes in attitude. She tended to agree with changes in focus and accepted her situation or status as a retiring player.

Interactions between their sense of self and other people's attitudes were also observed during participants' identity reformation, in terms of changes in the interaction between other people's attitudes toward athletes' new self and their attitudes to others. Isobel talked about how her interactions between others had changed after her retirement; "...they [other people] see me as a bank-teller...and the topic for conversation is now different...now I see them as my customers so I ask them to join my bank as customers..."

Another aspect of the interactions between perceived self and other people was found in comparison with others. Throughout the career transition process, all participants compared themselves with others (e.g., active athletes, other former athletes, other coaches, and non-athletes) to evaluate or explain their current situation, status, and feelings. Meredith compared herself with other former players or coaches when explaining her concerns of a loss of recognition. She said:

...when I played well, people called my name and wanting me and supporting me, but it is over now. I'm a coach now. It's the same. No differences from other coaches...good sport career can be advantage for me, but I don't really feel any differences from others...

Meredith's comparison had a negative outcome (e.g., loss of recognition). In contrast, all four semi-professionals, who were guaranteed secure post-sport careers by their tennis team companies, showed positive outcomes (e.g., enhancing self-satisfaction) by comparing their current situation with other athletes who did not have secure post-sport careers. Alex said within 1 month of his actual retirement:

I am in a better position than players from other teams. Other players, when they retire, they have to find second career themselves, in contrast, I have certain thing that I can do after sport career, so I think I am in much better

position than others.

To summarize, results indicated that athletic experiences influenced athletes' sense of self, and athletic identity and their career transition had reciprocal interactions. The results of retirement and the process of post-sport life adjustment were that participants experienced identity confusion, but they showed identity reformation between 6 and 11 months after their retirement. Overall, the main finding regarding identity issues is that athletic identity influences and is influenced by athletes' career transition.

4.3.2 Available Resources during the Career Transition Process

Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) suggested that athletes' quality of adaptation to retirement depends on their use of available resources (e.g., a degree of social support, coping skills). The participants in the present study also perceived that their degree of preparation for post-sport life, social support networks, and coping skills influenced their career transitions. Results revealed how individuals' available resources influenced their decisions, as well as the quality of adjustment to post-sport life. Respondents perceived social support as a beneficial resource during the career transition process and used various types of coping strategies (e.g., active coping, acceptance) for many different issues (e.g., developing new career skills, building new social networks). Four out of five participants showed maladaptive behaviour patterns stemming from stress, and these tended to be related to their lack of coping skills. In addition, respondents perceived their coaches to be part of the support networks during their career transition.

The sub-themes for available resources were: (a) the more athletes were prepared and were aware of transferable skills, the more likely they were to experience positive psychological status, emotional responses, and transition outcomes; (b) athletes needed various types of social support (e.g., information, emotion) throughout their career transitions, and the support networks helped athlete resolve career transition difficulties

and encouraged them to deal with different career transition issues (e.g., lack of career skills, adjustment to new lifestyles); (c) problem-focused coping was effective with career-related issues (e.g., developing vocational skills), and emotional-focused coping was useful for interpersonal issues (e.g., conflict with coaches); (d) athletes who were not able to manage, or were not prepared to face, post-retirement stress were more vulnerable to experiencing maladaptive behaviour patterns; and (e) athletes perceived that their coaches were a source of social support and influenced their decision-making.

4.3.2.1 The more athletes were prepared and were aware of transferable skills, the more likely they were to experience positive psychological status, emotional responses, and transition outcomes. Respondents spent between 1 and 3 years making a firm retirement decision, since they first considered retirement. They discussed both psychological and vocational preparations they undertook during this time, and three of them gained vocational skills during the final stages of their sport careers. Although participants experienced emotional difficulties in the early stages of their career transition, they came to accept their retirement over time, and they switched their focus to their new career. Christina said within a month of her retirement, “I no longer have goals in sport so I don’t have any attachment at all...now, my first goal is learn my new career as soon as possible...”

The results indicated that pre-retirement planning or preparation for post-sport life was related to post-sport career issues. Respondents showed various negative emotional responses and low degrees of confidence or motivation with regard to their new careers (e.g., fear of facing a new career) during the transition rather than other areas of adjustment (e.g., financial). The participants attributed their negative emotional reactions regarding their new career adjustment to their lack of life skills and experiences outside sport. Christina, who did not have pre-retirement plans and did not

develop vocational skills during her athletic career, had anxieties 3 months before her retirement. She said, “I’m afraid that I have to live by myself out there...I wonder [if] I could handle all these”. In contrast, Isobel, who postponed her retirement and tried to develop vocational skills in the final stages of her athletic career, said, “I learned computing skills...it is still better than starting work knowing nothing”.

Regarding post-sport career adjustment, most participants attributed difficulties in their new careers to a lack of preparation or vocational skills. George said 5 months after his retirement:

...I know I have to work here [bank office], but I have no knowledge. I have only been playing tennis and don’t know about rules for banking, language they use here, and things about loans...I need to learn basic things first. I am really in a difficult situation...

In addition, the results indicated that participants’ degree of preparation influenced their work ability, and work ability might have related to their psychological status regarding their new career, such as feelings of achievement or motivation. George, who experienced a high degree of work stress and expressed a low degree of motivation in his new career, said 5 months after his retirement:

If you learn things then it is easier to adjust, but I am thinking “What am I going to do today? How should I do?” Always worry comes first than anything else so I have neither achievement nor progress” I have never felt like “It [new career] is fun, I want to learn more”. It is just a work...I don’t have my roles or own position...

Transferable skills, which are skills acquired in one area that can also be used in other areas (Murphy, 1995), are another aspect of athletes’ life skills. Most of the participants were aware of the beneficial influence of their transferable skills from the

final stages of their sporting careers and talked about the merits of the skills during the post-retirement interviews. Isobel said 5 months after her retirement:

...athletes...we have been living as a team for a while, we are polite, we know how to care for others, and know what to do, what we shouldn't do...also I can play tennis, people from our office playing tennis a lot, so I play with them every Saturday morning...I think it is really beneficial to me [in building new social network]. In addition, my physical strength...I never had been ill or something, because I am physically strong. It [transferable skills] helps me many different ways.

In contrast, George considered transferable skills as positive resources before his retirement, "I think it [transferable skills] could be a beneficial thing for me at the work, such as team spirit and building relationship". However, he changed his perception of his transferable skills and did not accept the beneficial influences of transferable skills after actual retirement. For instance:

I went to play [tennis] with them [colleagues] yesterday...I can build new social network through that activity....but I think all others [things learn from his sport] are negative to me... I mean, like a mental thing...it is different sport and study, I am good at sport, but I have to learn from basic things about bank work, it is annoying...

George assumed that playing tennis with others was a positive part of his skill set, but he perceived that all other skills he had gained from sport were not helpful for dealing with his current career because of the differences between his sport and office work.

4.3.2.2 Athletes needed various types of social support (e.g., information, emotion) throughout their career transitions, and the support networks helped

athletes resolve career transition difficulties and encouraged them to deal with different career transition issues. Throughout the entire transition process, participants in the current study searched for various types of social support, including informational emotional, instrumental, and esteem support from close others, such as families, friends, coaches, and teammates. Athletes reported that informational and emotional support were beneficial throughout the entire career transition process. Isobel talked about how she searched for informational support from former teammates who had been through the same process and used the information to prepare for her post-sport career 3 months before her retirement. She said:

I ask things to a former teammate [retired player] and get information, such as what I have to study, what should I need to prepare...she helps me a lot for preparing work. I feel thanks to her that she tells me things I need to prepare and ways to adjust after I go there [office].

Cohen and Wills (1985) discussed two functions of social support in two different models: the main effect model and stress buffering model. In the main effect model, social support is considered as a social resource that has a positive influence on individuals' cognitions, emotions, and behaviours. The stress buffering model suggests that social support can function as a stress buffer, so support is not important if an individual is not experiencing stress. The results from the present study showed that respondents' perceptions of the influence of social support were multi-functional. Four participants perceived that they had a high level of social support, and they reported how social support reduced their career transition stresses. Alex said:

...[the] manager from [the] human resource department told me that they are aware of my contribution [by sport], so they [people in the office] are ready to support me to start a new career. He also told me not to be worried.

That is really great. I know nothing about the work and have to deal with it, but when I am told that they let me have time to learn some work, that makes me feel much better...

Social support in Alex's case is likely to be "stress buffering" because support from his company helped him to reduce the worries and concerns about his new career, which had been a source of stress since he decided to retire. Other respondents described emotional support that had a similar function to that of a "main effect". Christina said:

...if I was alone I couldn't have done all those [career transition]. I know he [her boyfriend] must be tired, but he was with me...when I talk to him about some problems from work he always listens to me carefully, these are all really good for me...

Participants often discussed the importance of co-workers' support after they started their new career, and how these supportive networks helped them perform better in their new careers. Isobel, who perceived satisfactory support from co-workers, showed less difficulty in adjusting to her new career than the other four participants.

She said:

...my manager asked a veteran, who just before gets her childbirth break, to help me for a month. She taught me about a month...so that was grateful thing for me...every time I work, I was guided [by veteran co-worker], so it was really good for me.

In contrast, George, who became a bank assistant after his sport career ended, expressed difficulties in dealing with his new career because of a lack of support from co-workers.

He said:

...I have five co-workers, they sometimes teach me, but they are all busy so I feel really sorry to ask them questions...they don't even have enough time

for their own work...I feel really sorry (sigh), I have a lot of thoughts and am exhausted.

George also talked about the gap between the social support he received and his view of the effectiveness of that support, which refers different perceptions about the exchange of resources between provider and recipient (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997). He said that he was aware how well his significant others had supported him throughout the career transition process, but somehow the support had not brought positive outcomes because of a lack of understanding. For example, he described the esteem support he received, which had not helped him, 5 months after his retirement:

...people say “Even it is hard now, you can do it after time passed”. But that is only people who can say that after they overcame it...how much they tell me, if I feel “This is not my thing to do”...I don’t know how to overcome it...to be honest, I feel really tough (sigh).

Three out of five participants reported their support networks as being one of the most beneficial resources they had during the career transition process. Isobel said:

...I got more emotional support from my family...such as praying for me and supporting me. That is the biggest thing. My friends from tennis, fortunately, we still have contact [with each other]...you know when you retire it is not easy to keep in touch, but I do and we also meet sometimes...they are all nice to me (laugh). That really helps me a lot.

Finally, all five respondents talked about a lack of organisational support for retirement and stated that national governing bodies should be obliged to support athletes’ career transitions. George said, “...it’s not possible [for the] tennis association to provide these players [retiring athletes] whole things for the future, but they [tennis association] should help them a bit. I believe they should do”.

4.3.2.3 Problem-focused coping was effective for career-related issues (e.g., developing vocational skills), and emotional-focused coping was useful for interpersonal issues (e.g., conflict with coaches). Respondents employed problem-focused coping strategies for career-related issues and emotional-focused coping strategies for interpersonal issues. Participants attributed work stress or difficulties arising in their new careers to a lack of vocational skill development and experience. They attempted to develop career skills before they started their new careers or tried to find someone to help them to build their new career experiences through the career transition process. For example, some of the participants postponed their retirement so they could have time for preparation. George said:

I'm going to work at the bank office...so I have to learn some computing skills, and I have to read some books about banking...I'm thinking to do that...so far, I really haven't paid any attention to do that...so if I go to office without knowing anything...it'll be tough for me...but if I play tennis 1 more year...I can learn computing [skills] or do some sort of studies. If I can endure another year like that, I guess it might be better time for me.

The outcomes of problem-focused coping in career issues were relatively successful, in terms of managing career-related problems and self-development. For instance, Isobel said, "I did some research. It helped me a lot...I think postponement was good for me. If I started it [new career] all of sudden, I couldn't have enough time to prepare".

Participants' interpersonal issues were related to conflicts with their coaches or teammates during the decision-making process, loss of social networks, and difficulties in building new social networks. As regards interpersonal issues, athletes employed more emotional-focused coping strategies, such as venting emotion, turning to religion, and account making, except for building new social networks. To build new social

networks they used problem-focused coping strategies. For example, they perceived playing tennis as a transferable skill and tried to play tennis with co-workers at weekends. Isobel said, "I am getting to know the people because of tennis. When I go to tennis court they really like me, because I am a former player. They all treat me nicely. I can have good social networks because of tennis".

Apart from joining amateur tennis clubs to build new social networks, participants used venting emotion, non-expression, and turning to religion when dealing with conflicts with their coaches, teammates or co-workers, and acceptance and searching for emotional support for the loss of social networks. As another example, Meredith discussed venting her emotions with regards to her high degree of negative affect owing to the loss of her former coach's support. Her coach became her co-worker since Meredith became a coach at the same team after her retirement, and they were still in conflict. Meredith said 11 months after her retirement:

Nowadays, I cry a lot. If I feel bad I just cry. Tears run first. Am I having depression? I often cry loudly. Compared to before it is a lot more now. I'm not crying because of work or things like that. I'm sometimes weeping to myself, and sometimes crying when I fight with my [former] coach.

Isobel talked about how she overcame conflict with her coach during the decision-making process by turning to religion:

...nothing really made me feel overcome it at the time, I just...I have my religion there are some things I can do what I want and also can't. So I just think that what is my God's will and just let it be.

Participants also discussed how they managed negative emotions (e.g., loneliness, loss of social support), which resulted from losing former social networks. The process of dealing with these issues was considered as an account-making process perspective,

which refers working through the issue, including, confiding activity, empathy, compassion, and understanding (Harvey et al., 1990). Christina said:

I can talk to him [her boyfriend] about things that make me unhappy, and then he gives me sympathy...it makes me feel that I have someone to talk to or ring about everything anytime I need... Understanding what am I talking, and he talks to me as well. In contrast, when I talk to my family...my mum and dad try to be good, but they don't understand... so when after I spoke to him [her boyfriend] I feel much happier.

Christina's remark indicated differences between the social support from her parents and that of her boyfriend, and it seems she obtained a positive result from her account-making, her boyfriend's support, in terms of confiding and receiving empathy.

4.3.2.4 Athletes who were not able to manage, or were not prepared to, face post-retirement stress were more vulnerable to experiencing maladaptive behaviour patterns. Four out of five participants in the present study reported maladaptive reactions to their sport career end. Respondents talked about overeating, smoking, excessive shopping, and alcohol dependence as reactions to difficulties in their new careers or ways to release their work stresses. George said 5 months after his retirement, "I smoke nowadays, I smoke a lot more, because I have too many thoughts and get stressed. It's because of stress, mental stress". The results indicated that difficulties in their new careers were the most significant stress sources during the career transition process, and their maladaptive reactions occurred when they could not deal with work stresses. Isobel, who experienced a relatively smoother transition than other participants, and did not show maladaptive reactions, expressed a lower degree of work stress and had stronger support networks within her new career context than the rest of the participants. She said 5 months after her retirement, "When I first started to

work...people next to me helped me a lot so I haven't really had difficulties...now I am quite well adapted... I am just happy with what I have done”.

All four participants who reported maladaptive behaviour patterns were aware of the negative influence of maladaptive behaviours, but they confided that they could not stop doing it, because they did not know how to deal with their work stresses. Meredith talked about her excessive shopping and recent drinking 11 months after her retirement:

I work every day, I feel tired, but I don't really have ways to release my stress. When this happens, some people say it is kind of mental illness, I am crazy with [buying] electronic goods. What can I say? I try to fill myself with something else. I also drink a lot nowadays. I have nothing to do to release my stress. So I like to drink with people...I do drink to release my stress.

The above discussion also describes her lack of resources, in terms of not having any other way to release her stress than buying electronic goods or drinking with people.

Three participants in the present study talked about lack of resources. Christina talked about overeating 5 months after her retirement, “I eat when I have stress”. She also mentioned lack of resources 11 months after her retirement:

I don't have a particular thing to release stress. I get most distressed, because I am still not very good at work, so I try to learn more...I don't try to find something else to release my stress, just try to lean more and try harder.

4.3.2.5 Athletes perceived that their coaches were a source of social support, and coaches influenced athletes' decision-making. All the participants perceived their coaches as one of their supporting networks and expected some kind of support (e.g., information, emotion, and esteem) throughout the career transition process. Isobel

mentioned her coach's support during her postponement period, which helped her prepare for her post-sport career. She said, "...my head coach let me prepare for my post-sport life...that was also good". In contrast, Meredith expressed unpleasant feelings about changes in the coach-athlete relationship and the loss of her coach's support throughout the career transition process even though she still considered her coach to be one of her close friends. She explained her feelings less than 1 month after her retirement:

I still think my [former] coach is the best person who knows me. I talk to her even though I know there is nothing makes me feel better, and sometimes I cry and feel worse...when I try to talk to her, but she doesn't really hear me...I guess, she is not my person any more... before, she listened to me whatever it was, but not now she just says that she is not going to do the same as before...

Meredith was the only participant who described a major loss of influence in terms of her coach's attention and support. She reported conflict with her coach as one of the major transition difficulties experienced throughout the career transition process, because of a reduced dependence on her coach compared to during her athletic career. "I have lived 12 to 13 years of my life depended on my coach's idea". Meredith was still unhappy with her relationship with her former coach 11 months after her retirement, and she considered quitting her new coaching job, because of the difficulty relationship (she and her coach had become co-workers). She said:

I still can listen to her [former coach] and rely on her (sad almost cry). It is really sad I can't [talked to her]. I still want to do that. I want to talk to her about my personal life, but now I can't... I am thinking if I quit this job, then it would be better...

All other participants, however, seemed to be aware of potential changes in coach-athlete relationships. Christina said 3 months before her retirement, "...when I leave the team and rarely visit or contact him...I don't expect that much support [from my coach]".

Participants also discussed their coaches' influence on the timing of their retirement. Three of them perceived a low degree of control over their retirement because of their coaches' involvement in decision-making and reported a gap between the coaches' views and their views on the timing of their retirement. Isobel, who postponed her retirement, expressed unpleasant feelings with regard to her retirement decision-making:

...because of the head coach, I continued my sport...when he tried to stop me from leaving, I felt that he is just being selfish...he just considered his benefits and the team rather than care for my physical condition. I hated it. It is selfish...ones' retirement decision, coaches' impact is huge... I mean it is not up to players' intension.

As mentioned earlier, Korean sport has a unique system which involves players being regular employees as semi-professional athletes for commercial companies, playing for the company team without doing office work, and becoming office workers in the same company after their sport career end. Four semi-professional players in the current study belonged to bank teams during their athletic career and took the office positions offered them after their careers ended. Some of the participants perceived that taking a company-related post-sport career was influenced by their coaches' decisional power, due to the coaches' role in the company, which was higher than the players' position. For example, Christina discussed her coach's power over the timing of her retirement:

...if players stay [in the tennis team] until the end of their sport careers

[contract] then they can work at the office [after sport career end] even if they have bad relationships with the head coach, but...even contract is 5 years, and the time is over, but in some cases if the head coach does not give players permission to retire, in this case, they have to play more.

Although the quotation above indicates a low degree of athletes' control over their retirement timing, other data showed that the coaches' influence over the semi-professional athletes' career transitions had both positive and negative outcomes. As an example of a negative outcome, Christina also talked about her coach's potential influence in her new career. She said within 1 month after her retirement:

When company sends me to the branch, I have somewhere I want to go, but if he [the coach] doesn't like me, he can send me to another city. Actually he doesn't really have authority to send me, but he can say some word like "send her to other city" or something to someone who has authority...if I have good relationships with my head coach, and he supports me, it's said [that] life in the office gets easy.

As an example of a positive outcome, Christina tried to keep a good coach-athlete relationship after her sport career ended and expected some kind of support from her former coach. Later, 5 months after her retirement, she reported how she felt about her coach's support:

The first day of my office work he [the head coach] came with me [to the office] and introduced me to co-workers. He did that for me. I have never expected, but he rang me and asked me how I am doing with my new career. He cares for me. I was impressed and also happy because he rang me...just ringing means a lot to me it already supports me a lot...

In summary, the results showed that athletes who had prepared for post-sport life had strong social support networks, and had coping skills to deal with post-sport life stress experienced smoother career transitions than those who had fewer resources during the career transition process. In addition, all participants perceived that their coaches had influence on their retirement process, due to the Korean system. Overall, findings on available resource issues in the current study indicated that athletes' available resources moderate the career transition process.

4.3.3 Decision-Making during the Process and Consequences of Decisions

When athletes faced career transition, they had to make many decisions, such as whether to retire, the timing of their retirement, how to prepare for their post-sport careers, and the selection of a post-sport career.

Cecić Erpič et al., (2004) categorized athletes' reasons for retirement into two major categories: athletic and non-athletic factors. Fernandez et al. (2006) reported (anti)-push and (anti)-pull factors, which refer to negative or positive considerations as sources of athletes' reasons for retirement. Data from the current findings supported the above two perspectives. For example, respondents reported that influential factors in their retirement decisions were injury, underperformance (athletic or push), attachment to sport (anti-push), age, new career (non-athletic or pull), and lack of preparation (anti-pull).

Athletes in the present study showed a low degree of readiness to face their post-sport life at the first interviews undertaken before their retirement, including a lack of confidence; however, they gained confidence from new experiences outside of sport over time. In addition, participants in the present study also talked about changes in their lifestyles after their sport career ended, and they described both positive and negative influences on their lifestyle changes.

The sub-themes for the decisions and life change issues were: (a) athletes perceived that they had freedom of choice, but they had to reach a compromise with team coaching staff and consider situational demands (e.g., post-sport career choice); (b) athletes showed a low degree of readiness to face their post-sport lives early in the retirement process, but they developed confidence and competence from their experiences during the transition process; and (c) athletes' lifestyle changes occurred as a result of their sport career end and changes in daily routines, new working environment, and new social networks were sources of both positive emotional responses and career transition difficulties.

4.3.3.1 Athletes perceived that they had freedom of choice, but they had to reach a compromise with team coaching staff and consider situational demands.

Although three out of five participants in the present study said that an injury put an end to their sport careers, they reported that they chose to retire voluntarily. Meredith, who retired because of her back injury, discussed her decision: "...voluntarily. I decided it [retirement] by myself. I decided to retire...my team asked [me] to play one another year...so it [retirement] has been delayed".

Data indicated that participants' retirement decision-making was not simple, and happened over time (between 1 and 3 years). As mentioned earlier, all participants reported their retirement as a self-choice, but perceived a low degree of control in other transition decisions, such as actual retirement timing or making preparations during the final stages of their sport career. Participants discussed two types of factors influencing their timing of retirement, which were internal (e.g., attachment to sport) and external (e.g., team situation). Four participants said that their postponement of retirement was influenced by team situations, as their teams needed more players to compete the next year. George reported that although he was influenced by his team situation, his

retirement postponement was his choice because of his attachment to sport and a low degree of readiness to face a post-sport career:

...my retirement isn't sudden for me, I have been considering it for the past 2 years already. I have been thinking of retirement, but it has been postponed, I have had attachment to sport...I just couldn't decide because I wasn't ready, and also there is my team situation as well.

4.3.3.2 Athletes showed a low degree of readiness to face their post-sport lives early in the retirement process, but they developed confidence and competence from their experiences during the transition process. In the early stages of the career transition process (i.e., before retirement and within 1 month of retirement), the participants talked about their low degree of readiness to face post-sport life and attributed it to a lack of preparation and pre-retirement planning. In addition, participants' low degree of readiness to face their new lives tended to influence their actual departure from sport and caused negative emotions. Alex said that before he made his postponement decision:

I had a fear...after playing tennis for over 20 years without any other experience, now I'm intending to work at office...I felt I know nothing about matters of that kind [new career]. I'm unlearned...I have to face a totally different work over there...the work, I never have tried...I have a lot of fear.

Alex spent another year in his tennis team, and attempted to prepare, such as learning computing skills and gaining information about his new career. He showed higher confidence levels within a month of his retirement:

When I see I am learning one by one and see outputs, I feel confidence. Is like computing skills, when I learn it one by one I feel enjoyable, I have

been only playing tennis, but now I am learning new things, and it is really my pleasure to me now.

Although the process of building confidence about their new career was accompanied by setbacks, participants adapted to their new life over time, facing new experiences and learning new skills. Christina said 11 months after her retirement:

I think I feel better as time goes by...when first I started my work I didn't know anything so I was really in tension while working, but now I know how to deal with basic things...I think I have some kind of composure as time goes by. I also make many mistakes at work, but I learn from my mistakes.

4.3.3.3 Athletes' lifestyle changes occurred as a result of their sport career end, and changes in daily routines, new working environment, and new social networks were sources of both positive emotional responses and career transition difficulties. In the three post-retirement interviews, participants talked about changes in lifestyles more at 5 months after retirement than within 1 month or 11 months after retirement. This result seemed to relate to the timing of starting their new careers, or moving out from the team dormitory.

Respondents expressed both positive and negative reactions to their lifestyle changes. Isobel, who expressed positive emotions and higher control over her life after retirement than during her athletic career, said at 5 months after her retirement, "...I moved [out from the team dormitory] middle January...It [life] has completely changed (laugh). My lifestyle...first of all more freedom, I don't have to care about time, because I do not belong to the team anymore". She compared her current life to her player's time and felt she had more freedom and control over her life, because rigid rules and restrictions, which she experienced as an athlete, no longer existed in her post-

sport life. Christina also reported positive emotions about her sport career end. She said: “This work [new career] is fun and satisfies me...I think I had too much stress there [on the court] so I don’t think I have much stress now. I feel much happier after I terminated my sport career”.

On the other hand, some players had negative perceptions regarding the changes in their lifestyle. Most of the participants discussed the loss of physical activities and the negative influence of sedentary work environments. Alex said:

...it is much harder than I expected. I have prepared both mentally and physically, but the degree of stress I get from work is a lot. Sitting the whole day causes physical pain like [in my] neck, spine, and eyes... I think I need more time to adjust to current life, because it is a new life for me... I mean this is change...every day is a really tough day for me.

Another negative perception was related to their social life. During the career transition process, participants showed concerns and worries about changes in their social networks and building new social networks outside sport because of their lack of social experiences. Christina reported difficulties in dealing with her new social groups. She said 5 months after her retirement:

Even I spend most of my time with these people [colleagues in new career] I don’t really have something to talk...when I was with my [former] teammates we always talking about sport, but people in here...this is more stressful for me than work. I sometimes think I’m an alien...I miss my former comrades...

Christina expressed difficulties in building new social networks and regretted the loss of former friends. She tended to build a new network 6 months after the above interview, but still she was not sure about it. She said 11 months after her retirement:

They [colleagues] do support me, my colleagues are good people. They try to help and try to teach me. They are good. But they all have different personalities, and it is not easy to be good with them all the time...even [though] they are nice to me I still don't know what they really are thinking about me... so it is hard for me to be with them. I just [feel] tired, and it was a bit awkward for me.

To summarize, the results indicated that athletes had to face various decisions during their career transition process, and as a result of their sport career end they experienced lifestyle changes. Participants expressed both positive and negative emotional reactions to these changes, and they seemed to adjust to post-sport life and developed confidence over time. Overall, the main finding in the decision and life change area is that the career transition process is accompanied by various decisions, emotions, and lifestyle changes. Athletes experienced anxieties and fears initially but showed adaptation to their post-sport lives and their emotions and became more positive over time.

4.4 Discussion

The aim of the present study was to understand Korean elite tennis players' experiences before and after their retirement from sport. Results indicated; (a) athletic identity influences and is influenced by career transition, (b) athletes' available resources moderate the career transition process, and (c) the career transition process is accompanied by critical decisions and lifestyle changes.

4.4.1 Athletic Identity Influences and is Influenced by Career Transition

Several researchers (e.g., Brewer et al., 1993) have discussed the influence of athletic experience on individuals' identity formation, and others (e.g., Lavallee &

Robinson, 2007; Shachar et al., 2004) have highlighted that athletes' identity is influenced by the termination of their sport careers. Reciprocal interactions between athletes' identity and their career transitions have not, however, been discussed much in the literature, and the present study is the first to provide evidence of circular influences between athletic identity and sport career termination.

The results indicated that athletes' identities, including their sense of self and social identity, were influenced by their athletic experience. When athletes confronted their retirement, the career transition process influenced their sense of self and social networks, and they experienced identity confusion followed by reformation. The findings are in line with Erikson's (1950) claim that individuals' identities develop over time, and identity (re)formation is influenced by life values, lifestyles, and social groups. The current results revealed that athletes saw the sport and non-sport worlds as different, because they perceived differences in lifestyles, values, and foci between the two contexts. Previous studies (Brewer et al, 1993; Stephan & Brewer, 2007) indicated that athletes' social and personal factors, including their lifestyles, social networks, social recognition, and occupations, influenced their sense of self. The present results might compliment previous findings (Stephan & Brewer, 2007). The athletes' sense of self was related to their social environments, but when athletes considered retirement, they realised how their lifestyles, values, goals, and social networks as athletes were different from those in non-athletic contexts. This realisation could be a source of their fears because they felt they did not fit into, or were prepared for, the new world they were entering, resulting in an identity crisis during the career transition process. For example, Meredith, who experienced a high degree of difficulty during the transition process, expressed feelings of meaninglessness when she made the retirement decision, because she felt her success, and the efforts and time she had devoted to her sport, lost their

meaning if she was not in the sport world. Although athletes expressed their negative emotions (e.g., fear of uncertain future, meaninglessness) based on changes in life contexts, key issues, which influenced their emotions, were their perceptions of the changes rather than the contexts. The results support Wolff and Lester's (1989) suggestion that it might be helpful to support retiring athletes with cognitive-behavioural therapy because the therapy help individuals correct faulty information processing and resolve negative cognitions of forthcoming events (e.g., changes in lifestyles).

The results revealed that their sense of athletic self influenced athletes' decisions throughout their career transition, including the timing of their retirement, pre-retirement planning, and post-sport career choices (e.g., postponement decisions, preparations). It has been reported in previous studies (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007) that a strong athletic identity could lead to a high degree of attachment to sport during the career transition process, and the current study observed that a strong athletic identity might influence retirement decision-making. The findings revealed that athletes' attachment to sport might be a source of difficulty in making retirement-related decisions and result in the postponement of actual retirement. The results might indicate that athletes' strong athletic identity could lead to a delay in the career transition process, in terms of difficulties in making decisions. In addition, participants who had strong athletic identities tended not to engage with post-sport life preparation until they had left their sport completely.

Erikson (1950) claimed that identity reformation involved broadening one's self-awareness and a conscious exploration of the self. The findings in the present study indicated that athletes' identity shifts occurred during the later stages of their sports careers (when confronting their retirement forced them to become more self-aware), not

just after their retirement, and they consciously put effort into changing their identity from an athletic self to a new self. The results paralleled Lally's (2007) findings, which revealed that student-athletes proactively decreased their athletic identity and consciously shifted their focus from their athletic roles to other roles when retirement was imminent. Lally (2007) described student-athletes' proactive shifts in identity as self-protection and assumed that having dual roles (i.e., student and athletes) allowed them to shift their focus (from sport to study) towards the end of their sport careers. The findings from the current study revealed a similar process of identity shift among elite athletes, who did not have student roles, but they tried to identify and engage with non-athletic roles in the latter stages of their sport careers (e.g., developing post-sport career related skills, broadening social networks outside sport). The results also showed that the athletes experienced salient identity reformation and conscious changes in self-awareness, since they started to engage with new careers or roles compared with the earlier stages of their career transitions, which implies that identity reformation is closely related to behavioural changes, changes in lifestyles, roles, and focuses (Erikson, 1950).

During identity reformation, as a result of their sport career end participants expressed uncomfortable feelings with their new positions or new selves, which Erikson (1950) highlighted as a sign of identity crisis or confusion. Some participants expressed feelings of not being in a right place within a month after their retirement, similar to the sense of "staying in the middle" found in Kerr and Dacyshyn's (2000) study.

Participants could be described as having "feelings of disorientation and confusion", which is related to loss of self and absence of future directions. The longitudinal data in the current study revealed that most participants started to accept their new self as time passed, and they showed some degree of emotional adjustment to their new identity

from 5 months after their retirement. The results could be explained as a process of identity re-formation, which is closely related to athletes' acceptance of their new roles, careers, and values over time.

From a developmental perspective, individuals' sense of self is closely related to other people's attitudes towards them (Erikson, 1950), and several researchers (e.g. Stephan & Brewer, 2007) have noted that athletes' identities are influenced by other people's attitudes. The findings in the present study support the idea that social interactions influence identity development. The present results revealed how retiring athletes used social comparison in their self-evaluations, with both positive and negative outcomes. Munroe et al. (1999) reported that non-selected college athletes used social comparison to reduce the perceived attraction of their sports, but the use of social comparison during the career transition process has not been widely discussed in the literature. In the general psychology literature, Festinger (1954) stated that individuals use comparisons with others to evaluate themselves, and Suls, Martin, and Wheeler (2002) emphasized that individuals' self-evaluation through social comparison is closely related to their self-concept, self-knowledge, and subjective well-being. The current findings indicated that it might be useful to provide information about potential positive and negative outcomes from social comparison to retiring athletes to help them to develop a positive self-concept during their career transition processes.

4.4.2 Available Resources Moderate the Career Transition Process

Danish et al. (1995) discussed the benefits of various transferable skills (e.g., being organized, performing under pressure), which athletes accumulate during their athletic careers. Most of the participants in the present study perceived the beneficial influence of transferable skills and tried to use the skills in post-sport life. George, however, who perceived transferable skills as positive before his retirement, discussed

the negative effect of transferable skills after he started to work in an office, because of differences in sport and non-sport contexts. George's perceptions might be explained by a lack of information, a lack of awareness of positive aspects of his skills, and failure to transfer skills to non-sport domains (Danish et al., 1995). The results indicated that educating athletes about the beneficial outcomes possible from their transferable skills during the career transition process might be helpful for them, in terms of using their skills in non-athletic contexts.

Athletes' social support networks can be one of the most beneficial resources available to them during their career transitions (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994), and the present findings supported this idea. In addition, the results showed that there might be a discrepancy between social support providers' and recipients' views on the available support. Rosenfeld and Richman (1997) observed that social support could be effective when providers and receivers have appropriate exchanges, but otherwise social support may be unhelpful to those in need. George's experience might be interpreted as the result of inappropriate exchanges between providers and himself (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997). The findings indicated that understanding athletes' situations and needs could enhance the positive outcomes from social support, and so could consideration of the types of exchanges between providers and receivers.

Folkman and Lazarus (1980) found that people use both problem-focused and emotional-focused coping strategies when they face internal or external conflicts. The results from the present study paralleled Folkman and Lazarus's findings, and suggested the effectiveness of problem-focused coping in helping athletes to deal with issues during the transition process. The results also supported Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) findings that people tend to use problem-focused coping strategies when they are in work contexts, because vocational stress is often related to problem-managing or

problem-solving. Participants tended to use problem-focused coping strategies for career-related issues and discussed its effectiveness. In addition, they used emotional-focused coping strategies for interpersonal issues, and the results indicated that their attempts helped them to deal with emotional changes. The benefits of emotional-focused coping strategies for dealing with interpersonal issues were less apparent than those of problem-focused coping strategies in career-related issues. The current findings advanced knowledge of the effectiveness of available resources, in terms of providing evidence of effective coping strategies in situational-specific contexts during athletes' career transition processes.

Some previous studies (e.g., Munroe et al., 1999; Fleuriel & Vincent, 2009) reported athletes' maladaptive reactions to their sport career end (e.g., smoking, alcohol dependence), and participants in the present study also reported maladaptive behavioural patterns (i.e., smoking, alcohol dependence, overeating, and shopping compulsion). Participants said that they were aware of the negative consequences of the behaviours, but they could not resist engaging in the behaviours, because they perceived that there were no other ways to release their stress. The results indicated that athletes' maladaptive reactions might be related to their lack of resources during the transition process, and their maladaptive behaviours could be prevented if they found other resources that they could use to release stress during the process.

4.4.3 Athletes' Career Transition Process is Accompanied by Critical Decisions (e.g., retirement decision, timing of retirement, and post-sport career choice) and Lifestyle Changes

With regard to the voluntariness of retirement, many studies (e.g., Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Lotysz & Short, 2004) have indicated that injury is one of the major reasons for involuntary retirement, and forced retirement can lead to career transition difficulties.

Three out of five participants in the present study reported injuries as their major reason for the end of their career, but they argued that their retirement decisions were voluntary ones because they could play longer through rehabilitation if that was what they wanted. The findings indicated that the voluntariness of the retirement decision was multidimensional and complex, which paralleled Kerr and Dacyshyn's (2000) findings. In addition, the present findings revealed that athletes experienced difficulties and negative emotional responses in making retirement decisions, even those decisions made voluntarily. The results implied that there might be more influential factors in athletes' retirement decision-making than merely the voluntariness of the decision (e.g., team situation or post-sport career choice). Examining the process of athletes' retirement decision-making might help to develop understanding of the overall processes of career transitions, in terms of understanding the influence of the reasons for retirement in the quality of adjustment to post-sport life and athletes' experiences during the decision-making process (such a direction is explored in the next chapter).

Stambulova and Alfermann (2009) emphasized the need for cross-cultural studies in the understanding of athletes' development and career transition, and the findings from the present study indicated that the cultural context and sport system could influence athletes' career transition. The present findings showed how Korean sport contexts influenced on athletes' process of career transitions. The participants in the present study, even though they chose to retire voluntarily, experienced a low degree of control over their career transition process because of their coaches' involvement. They attributed their coaches' power over their retirement decision to their post-sport careers, which were provided by their tennis teams. Four out of five participants chose to take office jobs that were provided by their employers, and they tried to keep good coach-athlete relationships. They also tried to follow their coaches' suggestions about the

timing of their retirement, because they viewed their coaches as superior officers (line managers), and coaches had influence on their office work (post-sport careers). In addition, all five participants discussed the lack of organisational support and occupational opportunities during the career transition process. Some of them also mentioned other nations (i.e., Japan and the USA), which they perceived to offer better occupational opportunities to retired athletes than Korea.

Alfermann et al. (2004) hypothesized a positive relationship between athletes' readiness for retirement and pre-retirement planning, and the present findings support this proposal. Athletes tended to build their readiness to face post-sport life through preparation in the latter stages of their sport career and developed confidence and competence throughout the process. The results also indicated that athletes' readiness for retirement is related to their degree of confidence to deal with post-sport life and might influence the timing of the retirement. It might be useful to examine readiness for retirement during the career transition process, in terms of understanding athletes' confidence levels regarding post-sport life adjustment and supporting them to develop it.

Peterson (2009) emphasized athletes' potential loss of social networks and risk of experiencing isolation and loneliness during their career transition. Some of the previous research findings also indicated that loss of social networks is one of the consequences of career transitions (e.g., Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008). The present findings, however, showed that athletes might find it difficult to build new social networks after retirement, because of a lack of social experience and delays in social identity reformation. The findings contributed to understand another aspect of athletes' social networks related variables during their career transitions. It also suggested the need of considering athletes' changes in social contexts not just losses of their sporting social networks but also building new social networks after their retirement.

4.4.4 Strengths and Limitations

The study is the first to employ longitudinal methods with Asian elite-level athletes. The longitudinal data over 20 months provided insights into athletes' changes in psychological status and emotional reactions, as well as their usage of coping strategies and adjustment processes. Since studies with both athletes' pre and post retirement experiences are rare, the current study provided insight understanding of athletes' experiences of the final stages of their sporting careers and post-sport career transition process. The findings revealed how athletes experienced psychological and behavioural changes during the process. In addition, the results provided evidence of reciprocal interactions between athletes' identity and the career transition process, and indicated that athletes' career transition is a complex process. The findings from Korean participants, who were from a different cultural background from those in the majority of previous studies, might help in examining the effectiveness of addressing existing models and theories to different cultural groups in terms of differences and similarities in cultural influences on athletes' career transitions.

Regarding limitations, the present study had a small number of participants, and no randomized sampling. The results, therefore, might not be generalizable to other populations. As Patton (2002) highlighted, however, in-depth information from the "rich" informants might allow researchers and practitioners to extrapolate from career transition experiences of other people in similar situations (e.g., other [semi] professional tennis players).

Although the current study collected data from the final stages of athletes' sporting careers, the data collection began after they made their retirement decision and some participants had considered their retirement for a few years already. Therefore, the

study might not reflect enough of what happened to them when they made their retirement decision-making and during the postponement periods.

4.4.5 Future Research Directions

Although some previous researchers have employed longitudinal methods, the researchers commenced data collection after athletes' retirement from sport (Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Stephan et al., 2003). If future researchers could collect data earlier in the process, such as before athletes make their retirement decision, it might help to explain the overall process of athletes' career transitions, including their career transition decision-making process.

Regarding postponement of retirement, either before or during the data collection, all five participants postponed their retirement for various reasons. Although Isobel and Alex discussed the benefits of postponing their retirement in terms of having extra time to prepare for their post-sport lives, the other three participants said spending another year in the team did not bring any benefits, because they could concentrate neither on sport nor on their retirement preparations. Future research is needed to examine athletes' retirement timing or postponement of retirement. Examining athletes' psychological processes or changes during the athlete retirement decision-making or postponement periods might provide directions for pre-retirement interventions for retiring athletes.

The current findings indicated that coaches played certain roles during athletes' retirement decision-making and influenced the quality of career transition. In addition, the present study revealed that coach-athlete relationships during athletes' retirement decision-making and career transition process could be sources of athletes' transition difficulties. However, coaches' roles and coach-athlete relationships in the quality of athletes' career transitions have not been widely examined in the study area. To

understand coaches' influences on athletes' career transitions, future research is needed.

Finally, even though the present study was performed with Korean athletes and provided evidence of cultural influences on athletes' career transition process, the study did not focus on comparing cultural differences. Examining athletes with various cultural backgrounds and investigating differences and similarities between cultural or environmental contexts might advance the knowledge on career transition studies and help practitioners to provide suitable and appropriate interventions to retiring athletes.

4.5 Conclusion

The current study emerged from the findings reported in previous chapter (Study 1). The findings from the current study revealed that athletes' career transition initiated from the final stages of their sporting careers not after their actual leaving from their sport and cultural and social contexts influenced in the quality of athletes' career transitions. These findings supported the findings from the systematic review, such as the need of longitudinal studies and cross-cultural investigations in the study area.

The present study findings also indicated that examining athletes' retirement decision-making might help to understand the overall process of athletes' career transitions. Based on findings from the current study, the following study in the present thesis was designed to focus on exploring the process of athletes' retirement decision-making. Although the process of athletes retirement decision-making has not been widely discussed in the literature, the current findings suggested that understanding athletes' psychological process and their demands during the process of retirement decision might yield insight that help to assist athletes' overall career transition process.

Chapter Five

Study 3: Exploring the Retirement from Sport

Decision-making Process based on the

Transtheoretical Model

5.1 Introduction

A growing body of research has revealed various psychological variables, which help to explain the quality of athletes' career transitions, including the voluntariness of the retirement decision (e.g., Cecić Erpič et al., 2004), identity issues (e.g., Lally, 2007), and the degree of individuals' life skills development (e.g., Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008). Wylleman et al. (2004) highlighted that the early stages of athletes' career transition research focused heavily on the "end of the athletic career" and later investigations examined within sport career transition issues. The shift in the study area has led researchers to focus more on athletes' life-span development and the process of athlete career transition. In addition, since the middle 1990s, researchers have developed conceptual models (e.g., Gordon, 1995; Stambulova, 1994; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) to explain athlete career transition. The models describe variables that influence the quality of career transition or the overall process of athletic career development, but do not explain the retirement decision-making process in detail.

Cecić Erpič et al. (2004) examined the athlete career termination process and found that athletes considered multiple factors (both athletic and non-athletic) when they faced retirement. Fernandez et al. (2006) developed the Athletes' Retirement Decision Inventory (ARDI), based on push (negative considerations of not retiring), pull (positive considerations of the decision to retire), anti-push (attachment to the present situation), and anti-pull (cost and risks for the future situation) factors. They categorized participants' reasons for retirement and indicated that the decision making process might influence the quality of athletes' retirement from sport. Results from Torregrosa et al. (2004) showed how active athletes changed their views regarding retirement from sport as they proceeded through different stages, including: initiation-training (no image

of retirement), maturity performance (vague image of retirement), and anticipation-realization of retirement (clear image of retirement).

Alfermann et al. (2004) defined athletes' readiness for career transition with regard to their pre-retirement planning. Alfermann et al. hypothesized that if athletes have pre-retirement plans they may have a higher levels of readiness for their career transitions, because a planned retirement helps athletes to head in the right direction during the career transition process and provide feelings of control over the situation. Alfermann et al. also determined the concept of readiness for career transition as overall readiness for the entire career transition process, which includes athletes' pre-retirement planning, retirement decision-making, and post-sport life adjustment. However, since athletes' readiness for career transition is related to feelings of subjective control and their degree of self-efficacy, the concept may also be associated with the retirement decision-making process. In addition, since the term "readiness for career transition" has not been discussed much in the study area, there could be more ways to examine or distinguish athletes' readiness for career transition.

Researchers (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Stambulova et al., 2009) have reported that the decision-making process in retiring from sport usually occurs over an extended period of time. Recently, studies have explored factors (e.g., athletic identity, new career opportunities) influencing athletes' decisions to retire (Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Fernandez et al., 2006), as well as active athletes' perceptions of retirement (Torregrosa et al., 2004). No study has examined the retirement decision-making process directly, and no such models exist for explaining the process. The transtheoretical model is one that may help to frame understanding. As it is discussed earlier in Chapter 2, the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984) provides a well explanation of individuals' behavioural and cognitive changes, including decision-making. The model

is one of the most influential theoretical models in health psychology and has been used to explore individuals' changes in behaviours (Greene, Rossi, Rossi, Velicer, Fava, & Prochaska, 1999).

Researchers (e.g., Fernandez et al., 2006) have suggested that examining the process of athletes' retirement decision-making may help to understand athletes' overall career transition experiences, in terms of its influence on their reasons for retirement and experiences of the process. In addition, if it is possible to identify the psychological processes and demands during athletes' final stages of their sport career, it may help to provide proactive interventions to assist them. The current study was designed to examine the retirement decision-making process as part of the final stages of the athletic career (Stambulova, 1994) or toward the end of the mastery stage (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004).

The current study emerged from the two previous studies in this thesis (Study 1 and 2), because findings from those two studies indicated a need to examine the process of athletes' retirement decision-making, in terms of changes in perceptions and behaviours among retiring athletes during the final stages of their sport career. In addition, previous study findings (Study 2) indicated that athletes' retirement decision-making process could be considered as a part of the process of their career transition out of sport. Therefore, exploring athletes' retirement decision-making might help provide better way to assist athletes who are in their early stages of retirement process. To help understand the process of athletes' retirement decision-making, including internal and external influences and their cognitive and behavioural responses during the process, the present study employed the transtheoretical model (e.g., Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984) as a guiding framework.

The purpose of this study was to extend current knowledge of the athletes' career transition process. More specifically, the current study aimed to explore Korean elite tennis players' retirement decision-making, including their associated cognitive and behavioural changes, and the internal and external influences on their decisions during the final stages of their sport careers.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Participants

Participants were either current or former Korean elite level tennis players. I chose this particular sport, so I could examine the Korean sport context from both the semi-professional and professional levels and include athletes from both genders. A total of 12 participants took part in one of the three focus groups, and included current players ($n = 4$), retired players ($n = 5$), and coaches ($n = 3$). Seven participants were current or former national team members, two were national junior team members, and three were former semi-professional players. Participants' mean age was 31.25 years ($SD = 3.49$), and included seven males and five females. The current players were planning to retire from their sport within 4 months to 3 years. The retired players' and coaches' mean length of time since retirement was 6.9 years ($SD = 3.85$). Table 5.1 shows participants' details.

To focus on the experiences of a small number of homogenous athletes, the participants for the current study were selected based on three criteria. First, they should have had elite level competition experience (intercollegiate, semi-professional, or professional levels). Second, they either had experienced retirement or were considering retiring within 3 years. Third, their current status should be matched with one of the focus groups, which were current players, retired players, or semi-professional team (or

level above) coaches. I decided to have three different focus groups, so I could identify different perspectives of the retirement decision-making process among active and retired athletes, as well as coaches.

5.2.2 Procedure

According to Stewart et al. (2007), focus groups involve interviewing people in small groups, and these individuals act as informants for the topic. The method allows researchers to gain rich information from various people, as well as examining group dynamics and interpersonal interactions. Purposeful sampling was used for selecting the participants with the aim to select information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). A total of 21 potential participants, who met inclusion criteria were identified via snowball sampling, were contacted by phone, and were invited to participate in the study. Initially, 19 agreed, but seven were unable to attend focus groups. A total of 12 respondents participated in a focus group meeting, and each focus group consisted of a single type of participants (i.e., current players, former players, and coaches).

Focus groups examined current players' perspectives, retired players' retrospective responses, and coaches' views and roles in athletes' retirement decision-making process. The focus group locations and dates were scheduled for participants' convenience, and all participants were informed about the research purpose and procedure. Before the data collection, I received University ethics committee approval, and when participants arrived at the meeting room they signed consent agreement forms (Appendix E) before focus groups commenced.

The focus groups lasted 82, 105, and 115 minutes respectively (average of 101 minutes; $SD = 17$). Semi-structured topics (Appendix F) for the groups' discussion were developed based on existing literature (e.g., Cecić Erpič et al., 2004) and the transtheoretical model (e.g., Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984). Common topics for the

focus group discussions included: (a) retirement experiences, (b) timing of retirement, (c) steps involved in making a retirement decision, (d) perceived influences on the decision-making process, and (e) the relationship between the decision-making process and coping strategies.

Table 5. 1.
Participants' Details in Focus Groups

Focus Groups	Participants	Current status	Gender	Age	Higher competitive level while playing	Retirement plan or period
Current players	1	Semi-professional player	Male	29	Semi-professional	Within 3 years
	2	Semi-professional player	Female	29	Professional	Within 1 year and 6months
	3	Semi-professional player	Female	27	Professional	Within 2 years
	4	Semi-professional player	Male	24	Semi-professional	Within 4 months
Retired players	5	Tennis coach (Club)	Male	35	Semi-professional	4 years
	6	Office worker (Computer science)	Female	35	Semi-professional	13years
	7	Office worker (Bank assistance)	Female	35	Semi-professional	12years
	8	Physical education teacher (High school)	Male	34	Semi-professional	9years
	9	Tennis coach (Club)	Male	29	Collegiate	5years
Coaches	10	National team coach (Female team)	Female	34	Semi-professional	7years
	11	Semi-professional team coach	Male	33	Semi-professional	3years
	12	Semi-professional team coach	Male	31	Semi-professional	2years

5.2.3 Analysis

Focus groups were videotaped and transcribed verbatim. The time for transcribing was 24 hours and 20 minutes, and the total words were 23,813 (in English). The transcribed data were translated from the original language (Korean) to English by the researcher, and copies of the original language (Korean) transcripts and the translated data were sent to another expert to check the credibility of the translation work.

I followed Patton's (2002) suggestions for thematic content analysis, and the

process went through four different steps. The first step was reading and re-reading the original transcriptions to understand participants' use of language and their accounts of retirement decision. The second step involved breaking the raw data into meaning units and developing the initial classification system by identifying, defining, labelling, and classifying the data. The third step involved developing higher order themes through organizing the lower order themes, developed from the previous stage. Between the first and the third steps, I employed both inductive and deductive analysis, including constructing the themes inductively, followed by rechecking the themes deductively. In the fourth stage, I used the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984) to develop a process outcome matrix (Table 5.2, p. 150) across the three higher order themes and the stages of change (Prochaska et al., 1992). I used previous literature in the study area (Alfermann et al., 2004; Gordon, 1995, Stambulova, 1994; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) and the transtheoretical model (e.g., Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984) to interpret and categorise raw data into themes. In addition, I employed the Stages of Change Questionnaire (McConaughy, Prochaska, & Velicer, 1983) to identify participants' stages of change. I compared participants' responses to questions, which represent each stage in the stages of change and categorised their responses to relevant stages. Similarly, regarding to athletic identity, I used the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS: Brewer & Cornelius, 2001) to interpret respondents' degree of athletic identity through the process.

5.2.4 Research credibility

To obtain high-quality information, before the focus groups, I prepared myself as the focus groups moderator by conducting pilot focus groups, which helped me to develop skills, including dealing with group dynamics, reducing personal biases, and challenging and drawing out participants' responses.

To further enhance research credibility, I used member checking and analyst triangulation (Patton 2002). According to Patton (2002), allowing participants to review the transcripts provides evidence for the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of the data. In the current study, copies of the transcripts and results were sent to each participant to provide them opportunities to review their responses during the focus groups. Eight participants provided feedback, such as confirming the accuracy of the transcripts. In addition, as a part of analyst triangulation, during every step of the analysis process, I met with two other researchers with experience in this area to discuss the categories and the themes. After the analysis, another expert completed an audit trial, which involves: (a) examining the process of inquiry (assessing if the data analysis has been undertaken in a systematic and rigorous fashion) and (b) assessing the systematic analysis of the data (the classification system reflects the original data), including checking raw data, data analysis, findings, and interpretations (Patton, 2002).

5.3 Results

In the process of analysis, 277 meaning units, 92 codes, 28 lower order themes, and three higher order themes focused on participants' experiences related to their retirement decision were identified, including: (a) readiness for retirement, (b) psychological and emotional responses during the process of retirement decision-making, and (c) coping strategies used during the process.

Former athletes' reasons for retirement from sport were aging, chronic injuries, bad relationships with their coaches, loss of sporting goals, significant life changes (e.g., getting married, military duty), and post-sport career opportunities. Current athletes' reasons for considering retirement included aging, injury, and loss of sporting goals. Although some reasons (i.e., chronic injuries and bad relationships with coaches) were more external and out of athletes' control, participants perceived their retirement

decision was voluntary because they had the choice to stay in sport or retire. Two current players had returned to playing sport after earlier retirement, including one who had returned after retiring on two occasions. Among the participants, five had postponed their retirement from sport for 12 months, and reasons for their postponement included financial needs, attachment to sport, a lack of preparation, and unfinished contracts. Regarding participants' post-sport careers, among the eight retired athletes, five were working in the sport field and three had non-sport careers (Table 5.1).

Participants understood retirement as inevitable. They found that the decision-making process accompanied negative emotions, including fears of an uncertain future, self-doubt, and emotional conflict, because they were, or had been, leaving “this world” or “here” (the sporting environment) and “entering to the new world” or “going out there” (a new context). Athletes assumed that a quick decision would be better than being reluctant during the decision-making, because they believe that it is easier to adjust to post-sport life if they were younger during their career transition process. They also perceived that if they retire younger age, it would be better to earn time for post-sport life preparation and more post-sport career opportunities than retire older age. In addition, the participants agreed that the national law that most healthy Korean men must serve in the army for 2 years when they are in their 20s or 30s was one of the issues which they had to resolve for continuing their sport career. Some of the male participants mentioned that they could not overlook military duty when the time came to them, and two of them said military duty was one of the reasons for their retirement from sport.

The findings are reported in two different sections below, including themes and stages of change. Main findings are reported based on the stages of change model because reporting participants' stories over time allowed an in depth examination of

athletes' career transitions as a process and presentation of how athletes' experiences changed over time.

5.3.1 Themes

The first theme, readiness for retirement was related to individuals' confidence to deal with post-sport life and the potential gains and losses of retirement. Results showed that participants had developed their readiness for retirement throughout the decision-making process.

The second theme focused on psychological and emotional responses. Former and current athletes expressed both negative and positive emotions during the process of making their decision to retire. Participants tended to experience more negative emotions in the early stages of the decision-making process.

The third theme included coping strategies participants used during the process of making their retirement decision, including social support, active coping, restraint, and venting emotions. Social support was one of the most commonly mentioned coping strategies, and results showed that athletes employed different coping strategies across different stages of the process of retirement decision.

Findings indicated that those three higher order themes were closely related to and interacted with each other throughout the process. For example, results revealed that a low degree of readiness for retirement was a source of self-doubt about dealing with the post-sport career (psychological responses), and as a result, athletes postponed their retirement, which could be interpreted as restraint coping. The overall process of athletes' cognitive and behavioural change is presented below based on the stages of change.

Table 5. 2.

Athletes' Experiences during the Retirement Decision-making through the Stages of Change (Process/outcomes Matrix)

Themes	Stages of Change				
	Pre-contemplation	Contemplation	Preparation	Preparation moratorium	Action
Readiness for retirement Degree of self-confidence and perceived gains and losses	-Occasionally thinking of sport career end but do not take it seriously or thinking of specific consequences of sport career end	-Low confidence for managing post-sport career -Cons ≥ Pros	-Higher confidence → action -Lower confidence → tendency to continue to play -Cons ≤ Pros → action -Cons ≥ Pros → tendency to continue to play	-Higher confidence → action -Lower confidence → tendency to continue to play -Cons ≤ Pros → action -Cons ≥ Pros → tendency to continue to play	-Higher confidence -Cons ≤ Pros -If cons ≥ Pros → possibility to go back to sport
Psychological / emotional responses in the each stage of the process	-Strong athletic identity high commitment to sport no other interest -Denial -Uncomfortable feeling for considering post-sport career while playing -Belief that as a (semi) professional player they should concentrate on sport while playing than something else -Players may find coaches are not supportive preparing post-sport life	-Start considering sport career end due to below reasons; loss of sporting goals disengagement bad relationship with coach injury aging post-sport career opportunity significant life changes (planning to marry; military duty) -Start to weighing pros and cons via; self re-evaluation environmental re-evaluation weigh level of importance of the sport -Strong athletic identity high attachment to the sport avoid changes -Experienced negative emotions self-doubt fear of uncertain future feeling of betrayed -Discuss sport career end with team coach (only if they have a good coach-athlete relationship) -Discuss sport career end with parents	-Gain confidence through the process of; self-re-evaluation environmental re-evaluation social liberation Self-liberation Counter conditioning -Perceived balance between losses and gains -Decrease in athletic identity less concern about sport try to find other interests -Experienced difficulties in decision-making because of; level of importance of the sport attachment to the sport -Experienced negative emotions; self-doubt frustration fear of uncertain future feeling of isolated emotional conflict -Experienced positive emotions; relief feeling of comfort excitement feeling of competence -Discuss sport career end with families and friends -Discuss sport career end with team coach	-Postpone actual leaving from sport for below reasons, the team and coaches' favour contract financial needs attachment to the sport earn time for preparation lack of choice for post-sport career -Aware their actual leaving is going to happen in near future -Psychological disengagement occurred -Gain confidence through the process of; self-re-evaluation environmental re-evaluation social liberation Self-liberation Counter conditioning -Perceived balance between losses and gains -Decrease in athletic identity less concern about sport showed less attachment to the sport try to find other interests -Experienced negative emotions; emotional conflict bad feeling for other teammates -Discuss sport career end with families and friends -Discuss sport career end with team coach	-Experienced difficulties in adjustment for post-sport life or career because of; lack of preparation lack of life skills development no supporting system - Experienced negative emotions; self-doubt frustration anger regret for no preparation regret for the decision emotional conflict -Experienced positive emotions; relief feeling of comfort excitement -Satisfied with sport career end decision -Identity shift occurred concentrate on new career or role -Athletic identity remains
Coping strategies used during the process	-Mental disengagement -Planning	-Searching for social support -Support from others (coaches, parents, and friends)	-Planning -Active coping -Searching for social support -Support from others (coaches, parents, and friends)	-Planning -Restraint -Active coping -Searching for social support -Support from others (coaches, parents, and friends)	-Active coping -Focused on venting emotion -Mental disengagement -Turn to religion -Searching for social support -Support from others

Gain confidence through the process
 Higher confidence = action
 Lower confidence = tendency to continue to play
 $\text{Cons} \leq \text{Pros} = \text{action}$
 $\text{Cons} \geq \text{Pros} = \text{tendency to continue to play}$

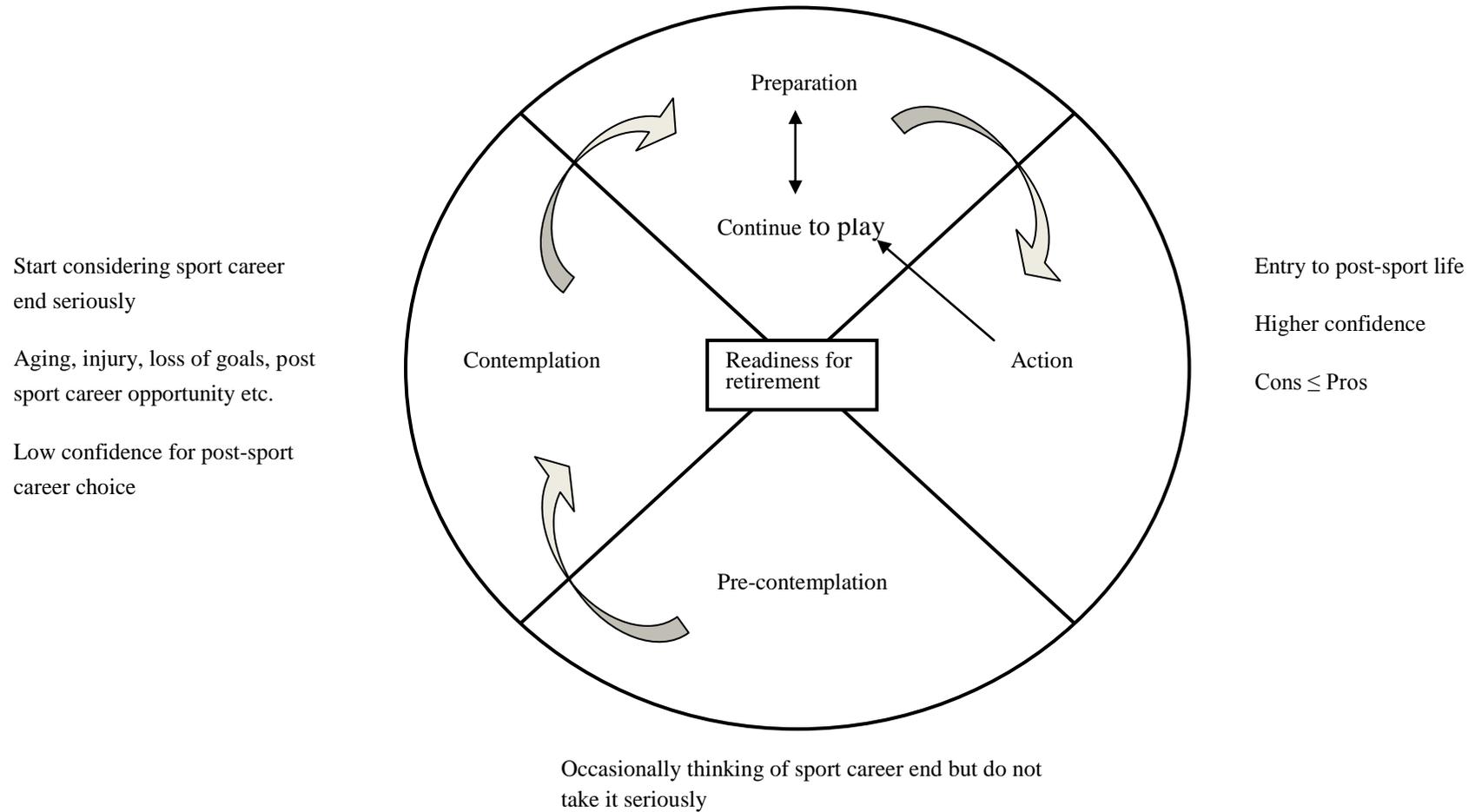


Figure 5. 1. Athletes' retirement decision-making process: Moderate model of the stages of change.

5.3.2 The Stages of Change

Results indicated that four stages (i.e., pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, and action) from the transtheoretical model could be used to explain the steps athletes experienced. Table 5.2 presents how the three themes above map across the four different stages from the transtheoretical model (i.e., pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, and action) and the preparation moratorium stage (i.e., the stage participants experienced when they postpone their retirement), which I added based on the findings. The transtheoretical model maintenance stage was excluded, because it did not appear clearly in the data. In addition, some of the athletes did not progress through the stages in a linear or straightforward manner. These participants chose to continue playing after they had made the actual retirement decision in the preparation stage, and saw the postponement as an extension of preparation. Figure 5.1 is a model of the stages of change in athletes' retirement decision-making, which was developed in the present study. The model shows four different stages, which contain athletes' cognitive activities in each of the stages throughout their athletic career to retirement.

In the pre-contemplation stage, athletes did not consider their retirement from sport seriously and concentrated on sport performance. When retirement-related event confronted them, such as injury, loss of sporting goals, and post-sport career offers, they started to consider retirement from sport (contemplation). In the preparation stage, participants displayed preparatory behaviours, which mostly involved putting effort towards preparing for post-sport life. The preparation moratorium was mentioned by nearly half of the participants, and continuing their sport career appeared to be one of the coping strategies used to earn additional time for preparation. The action stage refers to their actual leaving of their sport, and the participants expressed difficulties in

adjustment to post-sport life or career. Six different processes of change were discussed by the focus groups, including self-re-evaluation, environmental re-evaluation, social liberation, helping relationships, counter-conditioning, and self-liberation.

5.3.2.1 Pre-contemplation. The data showed that there was little readiness for retirement in the pre-contemplation stage, because the majority of the participants did not consider their retirement from sport and did not acknowledge the need for pre-retirement planning ($n = 11$). In addition, paralleling the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984), denial or mental disengagement appeared as coping strategies in the form of concentrating on their sporting roles or high performance. One of the participants who was an active player, mentioned an awareness of the inevitability of sport career end while actively playing, but did not consider it seriously.

I don't really think about retirement now. Yes, I occasionally have thought like this. "What am I going to do or what is going to happen later in my life?" But I don't really think of that [retirement]. It is far distance future for me...

Athletes showed a high degree of athletic identity in the pre-contemplation stage, via high commitment to their sport, few other interests or roles, and in the amount of time they devoted to their sport. One active athlete said, "[until now] I have only been concentrating on tennis".

All three coaches understood a need for pre-retirement planning, but when it was related to their athletes, they tried to stop their athletes engaging with outside sport activities. For example, one coach said, "...[an] important thing is preparation. What they are going to do. [They] should have a vision and prepare it". However, when it came to their special situation, the coaches were unhappy with their players engaging in outside sport activities, such as higher education, because they believed that other

interests or roles outside sport could distract athletes from their sport career. Another coach said, “Preparing post-sport career is good, but if it has negative influence on tennis career, then I think I need to restrict it”.

Regarding pre-retirement planning, some of former players showed a critical view, as one of the participants said, “...some players they just think, they stay in the team without any effort [for performance enhancement] and earn their times [for retirement preparation]. But that is not right”. The results indicated that most of the participants were not aware of the need for pre-planning while actively competing ($n = 11$). Additionally, four of them believed engaging with outside sport activities during their athletic careers was not suitable for active athletes. When participants confronted their retirement decision they regretted their lack of preparation. One of the current players said, “My dad suggested me to go to college [while playing]...but I said to him ‘It is my business’. I am regretting now that I didn’t listen to [what] my dad [said]”.

One of the current athletes, who came back from a premature retirement, mentioned how having undertaken some pre-retirement planning now was positively influencing his subjective well-being. He noted, “I have planned for post-sport life...having clear plans for post-sport career makes me feel free from concern of future”.

5.3.2.2 Contemplation. Participants were in the contemplation stage when they started to think of their retirement from sport. Athletes considered their retirement for several different reasons, including loss of sporting goals, aging, injuries, bad relationships with their coach, post-sport career opportunities, and significant life changes (e.g., planning to marry, military duty). The male participants discussed military duty as one of the obstacles to their sport career, because they had to go into army for 2 years when they were in their 20s or early 30s.

In the contemplation stage, participants had low confidence for managing or dealing with their post-sport lives. Athletes also started to weigh losses and gains through three strategies, including self-re-evaluation (e.g., trying to find costs and benefits of retirement), environmental re-evaluation (e.g., team situations or other opportunities), and re-evaluation of their attachment to the sport. Their perceived cons were higher than pros in this stage. One of the participants said:

I have doubt, if I quit from tennis and do something else, can I do well like this? I am not sure of that whether I can do this much [good] for other things. That is why I can't say, "No", I can't leave my sport without attachment.

In addition, participants' athletic identity was still high during the contemplation stage, because of the time and effort they spent on their sport, one current player said:

Tennis is what I have been doing so far, that is why I can't just let it go...when I am considering stopping seriously, I can't let it go. I have been playing this for more than 10 years, and now I am thinking to retire, it makes me feel so sad.

The participants also expressed negative emotions in this stage because of their attachment to their sport and the fear of an uncertain future. Five respondents discussed a high degree of emotional conflict in the early stages of decision-making. For instance, one of the active athletes said:

To be honest, I am still struggling, I can't decide whether stop or not. When my physical condition is good I want to play, but...it bothers me most since the beginning of this year [about 8 months]. I have had many concerns rolling around in my head...I want to do something else...I just keep thinking and I can't concentrate on tennis, but I want to retry [tennis] hard again. I don't know what to do.

When athletes started thinking of retirement, nine of them were concerned about their post-sport career choices, and they experienced feelings of self-doubt, worries, fears, and anxiety for facing their new lives. One of the coaches said:

When I was thinking about my future life, I had worries...I mean being a semi-professional player also one of the social experiences, but it wasn't easy to have a social life outside sport. I had fears for my [sport] retirement.

Five participants discussed a lack of organisational support for athletes' individual development and retirement in Korea. One retired athlete said, "I had to think what to do after I retire, but I also realized that there is no support system for elite athletes. I was standing alone there to make my [retirement] decision".

For the coping strategies, some participants tried to talk about their sport career end with others in the contemplation stage, mainly families or close friends. Only the athletes who had a good relationship with their coaches spoke to them about retirement and asked them for help regarding their post-sport careers. Other participants mentioned that they had to be careful when speaking to team coaches about retirement in the early stages of decision-making, because mentioning retirement to coaches could have had negative outcomes for them if they decided to stay in the team for another season or two. One of the coaches said:

I can understand why coaches are excluded during the decision-making process. It makes them [athletes] feel uncomfortable. Once they [athletes] say it [retirement] aloud, their position in team may not be stable, and if they decide to play again it feels weird, and coaches and teammates also can think "This person is one who is going to leave soon". So, it is very sensitive issue.

Self-re-evaluation, environmental re-evaluation, and social support, including both support from others and searching for social support were the coping strategies

participants discussed in the contemplation stage. Support from others, including families, friends, and coaches, and searching for psychosocial support played important roles in this early stage of decision-making process, because athletes were still carefully weighting their potential losses and gains of their retirement and tried to get information and support from close others.

5.3.2.3 Preparation. In the preparation stage, participants showed preparatory behaviours (e.g., trying to find other interests), and made the actual retirement decision. Participants discussed the timing of retirement, and most of them agreed that making a quick decision would be better than delaying their decision especially when they considering their aging. The age issue, however, was discussed from two different aspects. In the contemplation stage, ageing appeared as a reason for retirement, but when making the decision, athletes considered age to have caused them to hesitate. The reason for this was because they assumed that if they were over 30s at the time of their retirement, then adjustment to post-sport life may be harder than for those who were in their 20s or younger, in terms of finding a new career or having less time for preparation during the career transition period. One current player, who was 29 year old, said:

...if I was 24 like you (talking to 24 years old participant [Seth]), I could stop playing tennis and could start new thing whatever it is,. But you can't overlook your age. For example, if we assume that you [Seth] and I are both going to retire, but you are 24 and I am 29, then I only have limited things that I can do for future career. For example, it is not a good idea to start study for becoming a government officer now for me, but for Seth's age, you can be much optimistic and can do it. In contrast, Esme [another participant who was 29 year old] and I, for our case, we only have a few choices. I mean narrow path to go...it [adjustment to post-life] can be different depend on

ages and timing of sport career end.

In addition, participants reported how their relationships with coaches influenced the actual retirement decision. Athletes who had a good relationship with their coaches during the decision-making, discussed their timing of retirement with their coaches and tried to compromise good retirement timing for both teams' and athletes' benefits. In contrast, the participants who had a bad relationship with their coaches, they made the decision themselves and then notified their decision to their coaches. One participant said:

...they consider it [retirement] themselves, also discuss to team coaches and head coaches...if they have bad relationships with coaches they [athletes] just decide it themselves and notify them [coaches] that they [athletes] are leaving.

Compared to earlier stages, participants in the preparation stage tended to exert more effort in preparing for their actual leaving. Athletes built-up their confidence for dealing with post-sport life through several strategies that included self-re-evaluation (assessing their preparation for post-sport lives or psychological readiness), environmental re-evaluation (identifying job opportunities or approval from significance others), social liberation (gaining information of alternative social support from many different sources), self-liberation (acquiring skills for a post-sport career via learning courses), and counter-conditioning (engaging with other activities outside sport). One of the current players, who was going to retire within a year and half, said, "I am not going to put all my effort on tennis next year...while playing, I am going to also have some time to do something else". Another current player also talked about how he built-up his confidence through the process. He said, "I was worried only because of my fears of facing the new world, but if you break the frame [tennis world]

then [you will know] there are many things you can do. I never have regretted [my retirement decision]”.

The participants also tried to find a balance between losses and gains of their retirement from sport. The balance in the preparation stage focused on utilitarian gains or losses for the self, approval from significant others, and self-approval, but not pros and cons of significant others. One of the former athletes said:

I was aging and was also considering getting married. My future was a big concern of mine at that moment so I told him [a person who offered me a job] I am going to take the job right away...I was thinking that “I should end my sport career now for my future”...when I first told them [parents] they were against the idea...

Participants tended to experience a decrease in athletic identity in the preparation stage. They experienced less attachment to their sport, including a decrease in the time spent on the tennis court and trying to find other interests outside sport. One athlete explained his feelings for having other interests outside sport, “When I was suffered by injury, I wanted to retire and started to go to postgraduate school...at the postgraduate school I can learn things one by one, and it is fun for me”. Although there were signs of a decrease in athletic identity, the importance of their sport was still a source of negative emotions during their retirement decision-making, and participants were uncertain about their decision. As mentioned by one player, “...after I accepted the [post-sport job] offer, I started to think. ‘Anyhow, I have been playing tennis for more than 10 years of time, is this [retirement] too sudden to me?’ I had this in my mind”.

In the preparation stage, the participants experienced similar negative emotions as in the contemplation stage regarding leaving their sport and entering their new lives, but the participants’ negative emotions were more related to decision-making itself than

other situations or concerns, which were related to their post-sport lives (e.g., financial issues, adjustment to post-sport life). One current athlete said, “I can’t make any decision...I have asked people about this [retirement] because I can’t make my mind, but...it makes me feel more confused. I don’t know”.

Eight out of 12 respondents reported the highest negative emotions before they made their actual retirement decision, and after the decision was made the degree of negative emotions seemed to decrease. One current player, who decided to retire just a few weeks before the focus groups said:

When decision was made...I felt really relieved. I was really afraid, I haven’t studied and only have played tennis since young, I was really afraid to break the frame, but when I came out, there are many things to do, and I could have confidence.

Participants also discussed feelings of isolation. Three participants said that the decision-making process was lonely time for them. One participant expressed feelings of isolation during the decision-making process. He said, “I have to make all my decisions on my own...I felt like I was isolated”. One other participant also discussed difficulties in a making the decision because of her lack of autonomy; she said, “I am not a good decision maker since long times ago. Others always have made them for me, I am too used to it so it is really hard for me to make [the retirement] decision”.

Unlike the contemplation stage, in the preparation stage, after participants had made their retirement decisions, they had positive emotions, including relief, feeling of comfort, and excitement for their new future. The following statement showed how one participant felt over the time. “I also had a really hard time for about 6 months. It has been really hard until the decision was made. After the decision, I was really relieved”. The majority of participants agreed with his comment, because making the decision

itself was challenging for them, so after the actual decision was made they felt they had overcome one of the difficult tasks in their career transitions.

Compared to earlier stages, participants in the preparation stage became more active in preparing their post-sport lives through preparatory activities. Athletes' personal networks were significant for social support. They tried to get help from various people and to gain information about potential post-sport careers from coaches or close others. Short-term planning (e.g., financial, vocational, and educational planning) and active coping, including taking action and putting effort in preparing for the post-sport career, were used as coping strategies.

In addition, in the preparation stage, not all of the participants showed clear progression through to the action stage, but some seemed to remain in the preparation stage while continuing their sport. From the preparation stage, athletes went through one of two stages, which were "preparation moratorium" and "action" stages.

5.3.2.4 Preparation moratorium. Five participants postponed their retirement from sport for several different reasons. The process can be seen as a preparation moratorium. When athletes felt a lack of confidence and perceived more cons (e.g., loss of financial status, difficulties in finding post-sport careers) than pros (e.g., being free from injuries or conflict with coaches) for leaving sport, they stayed in their sport for 1 or 2 years, but were also aware that their retirement was going to happen in the near future. Two main types of reasons for continuing their sport included individual (e.g., financial needs, attachment to sport, a lack of preparation for post-sport life) and environmental (e.g., contract, team situations) factors. One of the players explained her reason for postponing her retirement as, "... financial and I am having quite a comfortable life here, so I am afraid of leaving and leaving everything behind. So I couldn't make it. I decided to continue my sport until next year".

The process of the preparation moratorium stage was similar to the preparation stage (e.g., developing readiness for retirement and decreasing in athletic identity), but there were several additional emotional and behavioural changes as well as coping strategies. The pattern of building their readiness for retirement from sport was similar to the preparation stage, such as self-re-evaluation, environmental re-evaluation, self-liberation, and counter-conditioning. They weighed the balance of the decision based on gains and losses from their sport career end. The players in the current stage showed a much lower degree of athletic identity than when in the earlier stages, and some of the participants experienced psychological disengagement, which refers staying in the sport, but for other purpose than playing sport.

I wasn't sure, and I was still in emotional conflict. Time of my sport career end was coming, but nothing was sure, at that moment, my head coach told me to stay in the team for another year...I was thinking staying one more year in the team is not a bad idea... I had been psychologically retired for 2 years. Practically, I have gone through psychological retirement, and finally I went to tennis academy [for becoming a coach].

Participants, who were in the preparation moratorium stage, mentioned that they experienced uncomfortable feelings when with other teammates, because of their reduced effort and concentration for the sport. One participant said, "They [teammates] are still young, so they need hard training, but I can't. It makes me feel bad for them."

The players perceived that postponement was one coping strategy, because they could gain more time for preparing for their post-sport careers or life both psychologically (decreasing athletic identity) and instrumentally (financial planning). One participant said, "I had a year of time, because my head coach allowed me to postpone my retirement...I could do some psychological preparation". In this stage,

participants searched for social support for emotional and informational reasons. They also showed active coping, such as searching for a post-sport career and engaged in available career development programmes. Participants also mentioned planning for post-sport life or careers. They tried to spend more time assessing their situation and building more specific plans than during earlier stages for their post-sport lives. One of the players said, "...not a 100% for tennis. While playing I may learn something else or prepare to be a government officer, learn to cook, or go to academic institutes to learn something".

5.3.2.5 Action. The action stage refers to athletes' actual retirement from their sports. Compared to earlier stages, the participants showed a higher degree of readiness for retirement in the action stage, including higher confidence to adjust to post-sport life and perceived more pros than cons. One of the participants recalled his feelings when starting his new career, "I felt I can do it [dealing with the new career] without any trouble".

Athletes, however, experienced difficulties in adjustment to their new careers, whether the career was related to their sport or not, and they attributed their difficulties to a lack of preparation, a lack of life skills, or non-supporting sport systems. One participant said, "...[I] really needed time to prepare...but I didn't have enough preparation, and coaching female players was not easy for me". When their sport careers ended, participants experienced negative emotions, such as self-doubt, frustration, anger, emotional conflict, and regretted not preparing for their retirement. One former player expressed his feeling as, "I really had anger for myself and also felt frustrated when actual retirement occurred. I was thinking I have got nothing from tennis".

The participants also discussed positive emotions they experienced in the action stage, including relief, feeling of comfort, and excitement. For instance, “I am going to do coaching...the thought made me feel excited rather than fear”.

Participants who had already retired ($n = 8$) showed an identity shift after their actual leaving occurred, such as accepting their sport career end and a change in their foci, as one participant said, “I have tried hard for that [tennis], so it is enough. It is good time to start a new career”. One former player, however, talked about losses and his fears of change when he retired from his sport, and it took time for him to accept changes after the retirement:

I was irritated...I have been playing this [tennis] for a long...I have been trying hard, and I have been succeeding...[in sport] but in front of me, I had only one choice. [Becoming a] coach...when I breakthrough the fear over time ...I am happy with my career [now].

The number of reported coping strategies used in the action stage was more than in any other stage, and the newly added coping strategies were mostly related to emotional-focused coping strategies, such as venting emotions and turning to religion. Some coping strategies employed in previous stages were also maintained such as searching for social support, including emotion, esteem, and information support (e.g., visiting former coaches to discuss future, gaining information about new career) and support from others (e.g., account-making). For instance:

There are many good people around me. My former schoolteachers, when I went to them and asked them for advice, I got a lot of support from them. When I told them that I have difficulties, they always were on my side...that really helped me a lot. I think I feel better while I was talking to them...I have overcome difficulties with talking to someone who I can trust.

The participants also employed active coping to overcome their obstacles. A former player explained how she exerted more effort to overcome career difficulties, “I really tried hard to overcome it [difficulties to adjust to post-sport career]. I really worked hard”. In the action stage, there were several kinds of emotional-focused coping strategies shown from participants. Some participants tried to vent their negative emotions, others mentioned turning to religions, including attending pray sessions, and the others showed mental disengagement, such as excessive sleeping. For example, “I went to early morning prayers session...I think religion is a really good thing. If you have courage, you can beat everything”.

5.4 Discussion

The present study explored the process of athletes’ retirement decision-making and provided a new way of understanding the process by using the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984). The results indicated that athletes’ decision making proceeded through a series of stages, and that several stages (e.g., pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, and action) appeared similar to the stages of change in the transtheoretical model (Prochaska et al., 1992). The findings also revealed that some athletes went through a preparation moratorium stage (postponement of actual leaving). Among the five stages and 10 processes of change in the transtheoretical model, participants discussed four stages (i.e., pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, and action) and six processes of change (i.e., self-re-evaluation, environmental re-evaluation, social liberation, helping relationships, counter-conditioning, and self-liberation). In addition, three higher order themes emerged, regarding (a) readiness for retirement, (b) psychological and emotional responses during the process of retirement decision-making, and (c) coping strategies used during the process.

5.4.1 Contributions to Career Transition Research

The findings from the present study provided potential applications of the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984) in understanding athletes' career transition process. The results indicated that athletes experienced cognitive and behavioural changes during their retirement decision-making, in terms of changes in their level of athletic identity, readiness for retirement, and short-term planning. The results revealed that athletes' vocational level (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) was closely related to their readiness for retirement and the actual timing of leaving. In addition, the current results showed that sometimes athletes' perceptions of the voluntariness of their decision to retire might be dissimilar to that presented in previous literature. For example, seven participants in the present study reported chronic injuries or bad relationships with coaches as the reasons for their retirement, and these reasons have been discussed in previous work as being outside of the athlete's control (e.g., Fernandez et al., 2006). The current participants perceived their decision as freely chosen. As such, the present findings support some previous literature (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Cecić Erpič et al., 2004) and findings from Study 2 in the current thesis, which has highlighted the complexity of athletes' retirement decision-making and perceived control. The findings also highlights that the voluntariness or involuntariness of the decision could vary depending on athletes' perceptions of their control over the actual retirement decision, rather than the causes of retirement, such as chronic injuries or bad relationships with coaches.

Participants' emotional changes throughout the decision-making process could be explained by cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). Festinger (1957) highlighted that during decision-making individuals experience feelings of psychological discomfort and as a result, try to reduce cognitive inconsistency after the

decision by changing their cognitive interpretations and attitudes. In the current study, athletes expressed a high degree of emotional conflict when they confronted retirement in the preparation stage. After the decision, the majority of participants discussed positive emotions, including relief and overcoming decision-making difficulties, and actively engaged more in preparing for their post-sport lives than before the decision. These results can be interpreted in relation to cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), with athletes changing post-decision feelings and adopting positive attitudes accordingly.

Previous studies (e.g., Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007) have highlighted that athletes' lack of life skills and a strong athletic identity are significant sources of career transition difficulties. Extending these existing findings, the current study revealed that athletes' level of athletic identity and life skills development also influenced their retirement decision. In addition, a strong athletic identity and a lack of life skills were sources of athletes' negative emotions and low perceived readiness for retirement during their decision-making attempts. The current results may explain why a lack of life skills and a strong identity may be related to transition difficulties: these factors influence the decision.

From transtheoretical research in other domains, when investigators have examined the amount of time that people spend in each stage, participants have been found to be in the contemplation stage for longer than any other stage (Prochaska et al., 1992). In the current study, participants appeared to remain in the preparation stage longer than any other stages to negotiate decisional balance related issues (e.g., weighing losses and gains). Also, they perhaps stayed longer in the preparation stage because they needed additional preparation time before they left their sport.

Participants also decreased their athletic identity during the preparation moratorium stage by developing other interests outside of sport or focusing on preparing for their post-sport lives rather than concentrating on sport. Although a decrease in athletic identity among retired athletes has been reported in the literature as a part of the process of identity shift (e.g., Kadlcik & Flemr, 2008; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007), a decrease in athletic identity during a sports career has not been widely discussed. In addition, the previous chapter (Study 2) in the current thesis revealed that Korean elite tennis players tended to decrease their athletic identity in the final stages of their sport careers, including psychological disengagement from sport. The findings in the present and previous study paralleled other research (Lally, 2007). However, similar to the previous chapter (Study 2), the participants in the present study were professional or semi-professional players who did not have additional roles outside of their sport, they had to search for new roles or careers in the final stages of their sport careers. Overall, the results revealed that athletes changed their perceptions and behaviours toward their sports and retirement after they had made their retirement decisions rather than after their actual retirement occurred to them.

One of the purposes of the current study was to identify factors influencing the retirement decision-making process. Readiness for retirement, including athletes' perceived gains and losses of consequences of retirement and a degree of self-confidence, was found as one of the major influences. In the transtheoretical model, self-efficacy and decisional balance influence the readiness for change (DiClemente et al., 1985). Similarly, the participants from the present study discussed how self-confidence and decisional balance (pros and cons) affected their retirement decisions. In addition, findings from previous transtheoretical model-based studies (e.g., Carbonari & DiClemente, 2000; McConnaughy et al., 1983) indicated that people who made

decisions for behaviour change showed higher readiness scores between the contemplation and the action stages than those who did not change their behaviour. Participants in the current study also discussed interactive relationships between their readiness for retirement and actual retirement decision. For example, when athletes had a high degree of readiness for retirement they tended to decide to retire, and after they made the decision they developed their readiness for retirement through engaging various preparatory activities.

In the athlete retirement research, Alfermann et al. (2004) discussed the need for defining the term “athletes’ readiness for the career transition”. They applied Hanin’s (2000) seven components of the psychological state of readiness for an athletic performance (i.e., cognitive, affective, motivational, somatic, behavioural, operational, and communicative) to explain athletes’ readiness for retirement from sport, and suggested that the degree of athletes’ readiness for the career transition was a predictor of the quality of athletes’ career transitions. In this study, I addressed the concept of “athletes’ readiness” to examine athletes’ retirement decision-making. However, since the current study explores athlete retirement decision-making, I was particularly interested in readiness for the actual event (i.e., facing post-sport careers and lives) during their retirement decision-making process rather than readiness for entire career transition process.

Although Alfermann et al.’s (2004) definition of “readiness” is broader than those of the current study and includes readiness for the entire career transition process, the idea of “readiness” helped to interpret the current participants’ retirement decision-making process and readiness for the actual event (i.e., retirement). For example, respondents in the current study discussed several psychological components similar to “readiness” that Alfermann et al. mentioned, including cognitive (short-term planning),

affective (positive view or emotions of retirement), motivational (high motivation for a new career), behavioural (changes in life style), operational (vocational training), and communicative (changes in social networks).

The current results tended to support Alfermann et al.'s hypothesis which assumed a positive association between pre-retirement planning and readiness for retirement. For example, participants in the current study discussed how their readiness for retirement had increased over time, especially when they were engaged with certain kinds of post-sport life preparation activities (e.g., developing vocational skills, finding directions after retirement) or perceived more pros than cons of their sport careers end during the latter stages of sport career.

This is one of the compelling findings of the present study, because the results provided insight into the processes of changes in athletes' pre-retirement planning, in terms of building short-term plans during the process. For example, although 11 out of 12 participants did not have any pre-retirement plan before they confronted the retirement decision, findings revealed that athletes started to develop short-term plans for their post-sport lives and careers, and their short-term plans were mainly focused on building their readiness for retirement (e.g., financial plan, plan to develop vocational skills). In addition, the results indicated that athletes could have control over developing their readiness for retirement during the final stages of their sporting careers through preparation and short-term plans.

Similar to the findings from the previous chapter (Study 2), the current results have provided insight on some of the specific Korean cultural and environmental influences on athletes' career transitions. Two male participants said military duty was one of the reasons for their retirement from sport, and six other participants agreed that the national law that healthy Korean men must serve in the army for 2 years when they

are in their 20s or 30s, was one of the issues they had to resolve for continuing their sport careers. Five respondents also discussed a lack of a support system for athletes' development and career transitions in Korea. They attributed their low degree of vocational development to a lack of education involvement while actively competing and no organisational support programs. The findings support researchers' (e.g., Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009) suggestions that socio-cultural influences could be different among nations or socio-cultural backgrounds and could influence the quality of athletes' career transitions.

5.4.2 Limitations

The results from the small number of respondents (e.g., type of sports, competitive levels, and the voluntariness retirement) cannot be generalized to a larger population of athletes. The findings, however, provided an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, and it might be relevant in understanding other people in comparable situations (e.g., other athletes who are in the similar situations in their sport careers in Korea).

There were inherent limitations in the reliance on self-reported data, and the retrospective design. The data could be influenced by individuals' own bias, poor articulation, faulty recall, inaccurate reconstructing of their past experiences, and by group dynamics during the focus group discussions. However, through containing three different groups of participants (i.e., active and retired athletes and coaches), the current study could provide different perspectives of the retirement decision-making process among active and retired athletes, as well as coaches.

5.4.3 Future Research Directions

To further examine the effectiveness of the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984) in understanding the process of athletes' retirement decision-making,

researchers might examine various sporting groups (e.g., different nations, types of sport, and competitive levels) and athletes who have experienced retirement for other reasons and in different situations (e.g., forced or abrupt retirement).

As athletes' retirement decisions occur over time, prospective, longitudinal designs might help in exploring the dynamic progression, and may possibly minimize the limitations of cross-sectional studies.

Findings from the current study and previous literature (Alfermann et al., 2004) indicated that readiness is one of the influential factors for athletes' retirement decision-making and the quality of career transition. Future research which examines the components influencing readiness for retirement and ways to develop athletes' readiness for retirement could help enhance the quality of athletes' career transitions.

Since the aims of this study were not focused on returning players' experiences, the results could not provide enough data to understand these athletes' experiences. In athlete career literature, influences of athletes' comeback experiences on the quality of their next career transitions have not been discussed much. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) found that athletes who experienced previous retirement tended to feel less satisfied in their second career transition compared to those who retired only once. As athletes' previous experiences have been considered as one of the predictors of the quality of their career transitions (e.g., Gordon, 1995), future research is needed to examine athletes' coming back experiences in further career transition experiences.

Participants talked about moving between the stages in a similar way to the transtheoretical model concept of "relapse". The term relapse in the transtheoretical model refers to setbacks in the behavioural change process (Prochaska et al., 1992). In the athletes' career transition process, the term relapse may not accurately describe athletes' regression back down the stages, because of the differences between the

changes in problem behaviour and the athletes' retirement decision-making process. For example, unlike changes in problem behaviour, athletes' decisions during the process of retiring does not necessarily relate to right or wrong choices in terms of whether they decide to retire from sport or continue to pursue their sporting career. The findings, however, suggested that examining the concept of relapse in athletes' retirement research might help to understand the process of their career transition, including what happens to players who make a comeback from their retirement.

Participants in the present study employed six strategies similar to various processes of change discussed in the transtheoretical model (i.e., self-re-evaluation, environmental re-evaluation, social liberation, helping relationships, counter-conditioning, and self-liberation) to enhance their readiness for retirement or to assess and cope with their situations. Those six employed processes of changes were mostly related to evaluating the current situation (self or environmental re-evaluation), searching for help from other resources (helping relationships and social liberation), and changing their behaviours (self-liberation and counter-conditioning). In contrast, four processes of changes, which participants did not mention, were more closely related to "moving on from problem behaviours". These strategies might relate less to athletes' career transitions because as it is mentioned earlier, athletes' retirement decision is less likely related to moving out from "problem behaviours". However, since strategies, such as reinforcement management (rewarding self-changes) and dramatic relief (expressing emotion) could help athletes move from one stage to another and can be used as coping strategies throughout the process, it might be useful to examine the potential usage of the other four processes of change, which were not reported by current respondents.

5.5 Conclusion

The results from the current study revealed that the process of athletes' decision-making is complex, occurs over a period of time, and proceeds through a number of stages (i.e., pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, and action). Athletes also experience changes in psychological status and emotional responses. Respondents also discussed several potential influences on the decision, and social support is one of the most frequently used coping strategies during the process. The transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984; Prochaska et al., 1992) helped to organise and interpret athletes' experiences through the time. The present study provided a new way to approach athletes' retirement process and identified several future research directions.

Finally, the current study emerged from the previous study in the current thesis (Study 2). During the longitudinal study the findings revealed that athletes already experienced their psychological changes during the decision-making process leading up to retirement, not only after retirement, including identity shift, psychological disengagement, and emotional responses. The results from the previous two studies and the current study in the thesis indicated that proactive interventions might be appropriate ways to assist athletes' career transitions. In addition, some of the literature (e.g., Fleuriel & Vincent, 2009; Thomas & Ermler, 1988) in the study area discussed obligations and involvement of National Governing Bodies (NGB) to assist athletes' career transitions, and the findings from the previous two chapters (Study 1 and 2) and the present chapter indicated that athletes perceived NGBs have obligation to support athletes' career transitions. Therefore, it would be valuable to examine the viewpoint of people from national sport organisations and explore the process of development of the athletes' supporting programme for career transitions. The following study in the present thesis may allow exploring perceived obligations of people from national

governing body in supporting athletes' career transitions and how they address psychological factors to assist athletes' career transitions.

Chapter Six

Study 4: The Development of an Athlete Career

Transition Support Programme: A Case Study

6.1 Introduction

Previous chapters in the present thesis (Study 2 and 3) examined athletes' career transition out of sport experiences. The previous two chapters focused on Korean athletes' experiences, which included influence of cultural diversity and sport context in their decisions and the quality of career transition. The findings indicated that the quality of athletes' adjustment to post-sport life was closely related to their life skills development, and sport context and environment tended to influence their decisions though the process. Athletes also perceived that sport organisations have a responsibility to support their career transitions. The results paralleled previous research in the area, (e.g., Lally, 2007; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000).

Researchers (e.g., Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993; Fleuriel & Vincent, 2009) have consistently highlighted the obligation of national governing bodies (NGB) in assisting athletes in career transition, because of the delay in athletes' life skills development and high degree of athletic identity that may be caused by their high commitment to sport performance. Recently, Fleuriel and Vincent (2009) argued that organisations' lack of support could hinder elite athletes in the process of social, professional, and family reintegration after their retirement.

Since the 1990s, a number of sport organisations around the world (e.g., Ladies Professional Golf Association, National Collegiate Athletic Association) and national institutes of sport (e.g., in Australia and the UK) have provided athlete career transition support programmes (Gordon et al., 2006). The programmes aim to enhance individuals' life skills development, develop educational and vocational skills, assist athletes' healthy career transitions, and enhance athletes' performance outcomes (Anderson & Morris, 2000).

Although programmes have been provided, only small numbers of athletes have benefited. The majority of athletes have not had opportunities to join the programmes, because most nations and organisations do not provide these interventions (Anderson & Morris, 2000). Herman (2002) examined former college athletes and NCAA administrators and revealed that both perceived that institutions are responsible for assisting athletes through the retirement process because organisational obligation is not only related to support athletes' performance but also their subjective well-being. The results from the previous studies in the current thesis (Study 2 and 3) also indicated that athletes assumed that supporting their career transition is one of the sport organisations' roles.

As it is mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, several researchers (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Woodman & Hardy, 2001) have discussed influence of organisational culture on athletes' performance enhancement. The findings from these studies indicated that organisational support tended to related to athletes' perceived stress levels. Since sport organisations have been considered as athletes' support networks, organisational culture (e.g., values, views, and strategies) may be related to attitudes toward supporting athletes' career transitions. However, in the study area, the obligations perceived by people from national sport organisations in providing such support have not been widely examined. It may be useful to understand attitudes toward support for athletes' career transitions among people from national sport organisations, as these people are in a position to have organisational influence on their athletes. In addition, examining the psychological support provided in athlete retirement support programmes could provide ideas about how programme providers have addressed various psychological factors related to the quality of career transition. The present study may contribute to study area by (a) investigating influence of organisational culture on developing career transition

support programme for athletes and (b) identifying ideas to encourage sport organisations to assist athletes' subjective well-being both during and after their sport careers. In addition, the findings from the current study might reveal the gaps and links between academic research findings and practical programmes in assisting athletes' psychological issues during their career transition process.

The purpose of this study was to explore the processes involved in the development of an athletes' career transition programme. The study focused on: (a) the views of the national sport organisations' staff regarding institutional obligations and roles in supporting athletes' career transitions, and (b) how these people address the psychological factors associated with athletes' career transitions.

6.2 Method

6.2.1 Design

A case study was conducted to examine perceptions of supporting athletes' career transitions among people from the Irish Institute of Sport (IIS) and how these people address psychological factors in the athlete retirement programme. Case studies have been widely used in many disciplines, including psychology, sociology, political science, and education, and cases can be individuals, organisations, processes, or programmes (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), the case study approach is suitable for investigating a certain phenomenon in a real-life context and allows researchers to use multiple sources of evidence, such as documentation (e.g., report, letters), archival records (e.g., computer files, records), interviews, observations, and physical artefacts (e.g., technological devices and tools). The case in the present study was the development of the athlete retirement programme of the IIS, and the data included documents, relevant websites, semi-structured individual interviews, e-mail

communications, and video files of their pilot retirement support programme. Patton (2002) outlined three steps for conducting a case study: (a) assembling the raw case data, (b) constructing a case record, and (c) writing a final case study narrative. The present study followed Patton's suggestions.

6.2.2 The Organisation and its Current Athlete Support Programmes

The Irish Institute of Sport (IIS) was established in 2006 and is affiliated to the Irish Sport Council. The IIS's aims are: (a) to support athletes' performance enhancement, (b) to establish effective relationships between athletes and national governing bodies (NGB), and (c) to deliver various NGB services (e.g., sports medicine, life skills development) to athletes. The IIS has three departments, including performance management, performance service, and performance medicine. A performance management team is responsible for developing performance systems and individual athletes' skills within the system. Various types of services, such as sport science and life skills development programmes, are provided for athletes by the performance service department, and a performance medicine team supports athletes' high performance via medical services.

The IIS provides an athlete support programme based on the Irish Sports Council's international carding scheme. The scheme provides financial, scientific, medical, and performance support services to eligible athletes to cover their living expenses and enhance sport performance. At the time of the study, a total of 22 sports, both Olympic and Paralympic, were included in the carding scheme. Every sport has different athlete criteria based on performance outcomes. The scheme contains five eligible athlete groups, including podium (medallist in Olympic Games), world class (top 8 world ranking), international (qualification for Olympic Games), developmental squad (medallists at World University Games who are under 23 years of age), and

junior squad (8 to 16 World junior ranking). The services available to athletes vary depending on the group to which they belong.

As part of the performance service, the IIS provides a lifestyle programme to support active athletes' performance environments. The programme contains three major threads, including education, career development, and life-skills coaching. The education thread aims to help athletes' balance their athletic and academic development by providing scholarships and mediating between athletes' competitions and school lives. The career development thread assists athletes to transfer their skills into the workplace. The IIS has partnerships with various companies and provides athletes with flexible working opportunities outside of sport. The life-skills coaching programme aims to help athletes to be happy, be healthy, and perform their best, based on having a balanced lifestyle between sporting and non-sport activities

(http://www.instituteofsport.ie/Institute_Of_Sport/Athlete_Zone/Lifestyle_Support/).

The performance support staff in the IIS and other psychologists deliver the coaching services to athletes, focusing on life-skills development (e.g., planning, managing time) and performance issues (e.g., coping with pressure, dealing with injuries) through one-to-one meetings and group workshops. The aims of the athlete lifestyle programme are to assist elite level athletes' individual development and support their performance enhancement. According to the IIS web page, 263 elite level athletes benefited from the programme in 2009

(http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/High_Performance/High_Performance_Unit/International_Carding_Scheme/Recipients_this_year/). Since July 2008, the IIS has provided the above services to retiring and retired athletes as a pilot retirement programme, and seven elite performers have benefited from the programme.

In October 2009, the IIS decided to develop the athlete retirement programme to assist athletes' career transition out of sport. The decision was made based on an IIS internal report, which indicated the limitations of the current programme in assisting retiring athletes, and the need for a systematic programme for supporting athletes' career transition out of sport.

6.2.3 Participants

The participants in the present study were selected purposively based on Patton's (2002) sampling strategies. Five male participants in the athlete retirement support programme development group were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Participants' mean age was 38 years ($SD = 8$), and three respondents worked for the organisation (i.e., a performance service director, a programme development manager, and a programme provider). The other two were external advisory programme development group members, including (a) a former elite level athlete who was also a current national team coach, and (b) a former Paralympic medallist who was also the current chair of another national sport institute.

6.2.4 Procedure

On the basis of information from a stakeholder (one of the external advisory programme development group members) that the IIS was in the process of developing an athletes' career transition support programme, I contacted one member of the development team and asked whether they were interested in taking part in a study. The team agreed to participate. After I received ethical approval from the University ethics committee and consent from participants (Appendix H), data collection began in December 2009 for a period of 12 months. Participants also agreed to the IIS's identity being revealed in presentation of the study findings. During data collection, I assembled

multiple sources of data, such as documents, information from relevant websites, individual interviews, e-mail communications, and video files. Documentation included various kinds of official papers, such as slides about the IIS and its programmes, brochures, official programme development meeting reports, programme development progress reports, written feedback from external advisory programme development group members, and the final programme outline report. The semi-structured interview guides were developed for each participant based on previous literature (Danish et al., 1993; Thomas & Ermler, 1988; Appendix I).

I conducted a total of six interviews with five participants, including two interviews with the programme development manager. I had the first telephone interview with the programme development manager at the end of December 2009, which was a month after the IIS's first programme development meeting. The second interview with the programme development manager and all other interviews with the other four participants were conducted as face-to-face interviews at the end of January 2010 on site at the IIS. The first interview with the programme development manager focused on collecting information about the IIS, and all other interviews examined their programme development. The semi-structured interview topics included (a) participants' roles in the programme development, (b) the IIS' psychological approaches in assisting athletes' career transitions, and (c) potential benefits of the programme. Data collection ended in December 2010 as the IIS confirmed the final programme outline.

6.2.5 Analysis

Table 6.1 provides a summary of the various sources of data. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The average time for interviews was 57 minutes, and they ranged between 41 and 80 minutes. The total time for transcribing was 73

hours and 5 minutes, and the total words were 45,213. A total of 225 pages of documentation data were collected, including 10 pages of brochures, 52 pages of international carding scheme information, 56 pages of research reports on the Irish elite sport environment (Guerin, Moran, Langan, Lyons, Ringland, & MacIntyre, 2008), four pages of the IIS reports on the pilot retirement programme (e.g., case studies with athletes involved in the pilot retirement programme), and 103 pages of official documents for the new programme development (i.e., meeting agendas, post-meeting reports, slides, external advisory programme development group members' feedback, and the final programme outline report). Other sources of data, including two video files (which contained athletes' experiences of a pilot retirement support programme and the current lifestyle programme), three e-mail communications with a programme development manager, and various relevant webpages (the official IIS and ISC webpages), such as three pages of news stories related to the athlete support programme, nine pages of introduction to the institute, staff, and external advisory programme development group members, and 11 pages of programme information, were also collected.

Immediately following data collection, I arranged the data into chronological order to understand the characteristics of the organisation and the progression of the programme development. I also wrote a detailed case story to organize and extract insights from the large data set (Eisenhardt, 1989). The case story presents the process of development of the athlete retirement support programme across time.

I analysed interview transcripts by thematic content analysis based on Patton's (2002) suggestions. The process of analysis included: (a) reading and re-reading the original manuscripts, (b) identifying meaning units, and (c) classifying patterns and themes. The thematic analysis indicated that themes related to psychological support

(research question 2) had two major dimensions, including interventions and time, which can be arranged to produce a grid with four quadrants. Figure 6.1 (p. 199) is a process (time)/outcome (interventions) matrix of the IIS's psychological intervention strategies for the athlete retirement programme, which was created to explain the psychological interventions and potential benefits from the IIS programme that could be accrued over time. More specifically, the matrix presents various intervention strategies for different athlete groups (i.e., active, retiring, and retired athletes).

Table 6. 1.

Data sources and Detailed Information of Data

Data sources	Detailed information	
Interviews	6 semi-structured individual interviews with 5 participants	1 telephone interview 5 face-to-face interviews
E-mail communication	3 e-mail communications	3 mails
Documentation	A total of 173 pages Brochures Research report The IIS report on the pilot retirement programme Official document for the programme development	10 pages 56 pages 4 pages 103 pages
Video files	Athletes' experiences of the pilot retirement support programme and the current lifestyle programme	2 files (http://www.facebook.com/mobileprotection#!/video/video.php?v=38583875820) [accessed 2010, Feb] (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kq8wbz6csw) [accessed 2010, Oct]
The IIS and ISC webpages	News stories Introductions of the IIS, staff, and external programme development members Information on the current lifestyle programme	3 pages 9 pages 11 pages

I used Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes and the Life Development Intervention model (LDI; Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1992) as theoretical frameworks to guide the description and interpretation of

findings from the original data. For example, when participants discussed athletes' psychological experiences and potential benefits related to their intervention programmes, I compared their responses to Danish et al.'s and Taylor and Ogilvie's models and categorised them into themes.

6.2.6 Research Credibility

The current study used multiple sources of data, which Yin (2009) described as methodological triangulation. The use of multiple sources of data helped me to corroborate findings based on multiple evidences. I also used member checking (Patton, 2002) and examined the chain of evidence (Yin, 2009). Patton (2002) highlighted that participants' review of the interview transcripts and analysis results could be used as evidence for the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of the data. For the member checking, I sent copies of the manuscripts and results to each participant and provided them with opportunities to review their responses during the interviews and research findings. Three participants responded and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and findings.

I used theory triangulation to examine data from various perspectives (Patton, 2002), based on two different models (i.e., LDI; Danish et al., 1992; conceptual model of adaptation to retirement; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). In addition, during each step of the analysis process, I had regular meetings with two other researchers who have experience in the study area and methodology and discussed the process of clarifying and categorizing the themes. After the analysis, another expert examined the chain of evidence, including: (a) examining the evidence supporting the result (tracking down whether the findings are from the original data), (b) assessing the collected data (inspecting the appropriateness of evidence), and (c) checking the link between research

protocol and initial study questions (examining that the data analysis process has been done rigorously; Yin, 2009).

6.3 Results

The analysis procedure resulted in 168 meaning units, 46 patterns, 19 first order themes, and five higher order themes. The higher order themes included: (a) positive attitudes toward athlete support, (b) potential limitations and risks, (c) potential solutions, (d) life skills development interventions, and (e) proactive and reactive support (Table 6.2). Three of the themes (i.e., positive attitudes toward athlete support, potential limitations and risks, and potential solutions) were related to participants' perceptions on supporting athletes' retirement (question 1 in the current study). Two other themes (i.e., life skills development interventions and proactive and reactive support) explained the IIS's approaches to supporting athletes' psychological issues (e.g., identity, emotional responses) during their career transitions (question 2 in the current study). These two themes were interrelated, and Figure 6.1 was developed to explain the interventions, which the IIS planned to provide to athletes over time.

The multiple data sources led to a case story, which included characteristics of the organisation, its current lifestyle programme, and the new programme development process. To understand the overall process of the IIS's athlete retirement support programme development over time, the case story is presented below, followed by participants' perceptions for supporting athletes' career transitions and interventions focusing on psychological factors are reported.

Table 6. 2.
Themes for the IIS Staff Attitude toward the Athlete Support and Their Psychological Interventions

Pattern (46)	First order theme (19)	Higher order theme (5)
Duty of care Aware of the need to provide the programme Aims (performance enhancement and well-being) Put a high value on elite sport	Obligations Value high for elite sport	Positive attitude toward athlete support
No staff training programme Limited human resources Athletes' attitude Coaches' attitude/resistant Practical challenges Funding cuts Political issues Negative outcomes of the programme	Potential limitations Potential risks	Potential limitations and risks
Solutions for athletes' attitude Solutions to coaches' attitude Solutions to other problems To avoid conflict between athletes' surroundings Programme delivery Staff training Risk of negative outcomes Limited resources	Marketing performance agenda/communications Developing staff training programme Systematic balance Online service	Potential solutions
Providing support for athletes to be aware of their transferable skills Using education as a positive distraction for sport Keeping athletes' balance of life (identity) through time management Developing athletes' autonomy Seeing retiring athletes as a future resource and asking their generativity	Cognitive interventions for overall individual development	Life skills development interventions

(giving back to sport) Focusing athletes' balanced life styles both athletic and non-athletic lives	Behavioural interventions for overall individual development	
Broadening social networks	Social interventions for overall individual development	
Developing athletes' multiple self-identities Keeping positive self-image (self-esteem/self-worth) without sport Aware of positive self-image and competence (self-awareness) Monitoring athletes' motivation Keeping athletes' sense of control (decisions) Analysing emotional status Providing psychologists' counselling support	Cognitive interventions for psychological issues	Proactive and reactive support
Changing athletes' attitude toward retirement through education Encouraging athletes to engage with non-athletic activities	Behavioural interventions for psychological issues	
Using athletes' social support networks Providing social support	Social interventions for psychological issues	
Supporting preparation (work-shops/mentoring/other services) Pre-retirement support Building athletes' competence through life skills development	Readiness for retirement	
Focusing on individual differences	Individualization	
Considering career transition as a process	Long-term support	
Sense of being supported Sense of direction Reducing concerns about the future	Psychological benefits	

6.3.1 Development Process of the Athlete Retirement Support Programme

In October 2009, the IIS decided to develop the athlete retirement programme as part of the current lifestyle programme and established a project development group. The idea of developing the athlete retirement programme was based on the previous 2 years of the IIS's lifestyle support experiences with Irish elite athletes. The IIS performance service director, who was also a sport psychologist, reported the IIS's philosophy for supporting athletes as "trying to support athletes with a holistic approach". The aim of the project was "to devise and implement a best practice athlete retirement transition programme" (project overview report, 2009, para. 3). To develop the athlete retirement programme, the IIS invited 15 internal and external experts (external advisory programme development group members), including sport psychologists, a retirement planner, developmental experts, a financial planner, a national team coach, a former athlete, and the IIS's athlete support team members, to be part of the development team.

In November 2009, the IIS had the first programme development meeting with the group members. According to the IIS's programme development reports, they initiated the meeting via providing brief information on the current lifestyle programme (e.g., education, career development support) and describing the aims of the new programme (i.e., retirement support). Sequentially, programme development group members discussed: (a) key issues that athletes confront during their career transition out of sport and (b) a series of interventions that the IIS could provide to support athletes' career transition. About a month after the first meeting, the IIS developed the new programme outline, which contained the aims of the programme, target athlete groups, budget plans, and programme delivery strategies. The second meeting of the programme development group took place in February 2010, and members analysed feedback on the first athlete

retirement programme outline report and discussed other issues (e.g., the strategic context and the IIS's resource capability). In October 2010, a programme development manager, who was also one of the service providers, confirmed the first programme outline as the final version of the athlete support programme, called the "passport programme". He also added that the IIS planned to implement the programme in 2011.

I can confirm that we have not developed any marketing literature since the programme steering group reported on its finding in January of this year. As it stands the passport programme has not been implemented however we plan to ready the programme for implementation in 2011 (Programme development manager, personal communication, October 20, 2010).

Although the final athlete retirement programme was an independent initiative, the athlete retirement support programme was not intended to stand alone but was to be connected with the other current lifestyle programmes (e.g., education, career development), to help provide both proactive interventions for active athletes (e.g., education, career development service) and reactive support for retired athletes (e.g., post-sport career search, clinical counselling with psychologists).

6.3.2 Participants' Perceptions for Supporting Athletes' Career Transitions

Participants perceived that providing the athlete support programme was one of the IIS's obligations as a national sport organisation. They also talked about several potential limitations (e.g., a lack of human resources) and risks (e.g., funding cuts) of providing support to athletes and discussed potential solutions to these limitations and risks.

6.3.2.1 Positive attitudes. Participants had positive attitudes towards providing an athlete support programme. They also understood the need to provide the athlete retirement support programme and put a high value on elite sport.

One of the external programme development group members, who used to be an athlete, as well as a current national team coach said, “I think it [supporting retiring athletes] should be an obligation for the National Governing Body definitely...not only does participation bring kids into the sport, but it is obviously exiting”.

All three participants who worked for the IIS showed views reflecting the above “duty of care” idea. A programme development manager also said:

...why we do it [supporting retiring athletes] is because this is a duty of care here. If you are asking people who are representing our country we have got to make sure that we are supporting them to be better people.

Participants described that although the new programme focused specifically on athletes’ career transition support, the programme was planned for active, retiring, and retired athletes. The aims of the athlete retirement support programme were to enhance athletes’ sport performance and subjective well-being, which paralleled a purpose of their current lifestyle programme. The people from the IIS considered the new programme as an add-on to the current lifestyle programme, which could focus on athletes’ retirement support through both proactive and reactive approaches. A programme development director talked about the initial idea of developing a specific retirement programme, which showed the supportive attitudes towards assisting athletes’ retirement among the IIS staff. He said:

Our experiences of having banded the initial approach [pilot retirement programme in the current programme] have driven us to want to do more, want to do better. What we have recognized is a need to deal with transition or retirement...

The final programme outline report indicated that the new programme had two aims, including enhancing athletes’ sport performance through developing a range of

lifestyle supports and assisting athletes' healthy career transitions by providing various services and using athletes' transferable skills. A programme development director said, "...one [aim] is performance improvement to assist athletes, in terms of their development of performance management skills...the second objective is actually to safely transition [them] out of the world of sport into the second career part".

6.3.2.2 Potential limitations and risks. In addition to discussing their positive attitudes, participants mentioned several potential limitations, including practical issues (e.g., limited human resources) and athletes' and coaches' negative attitudes toward programme involvement. Respondents also talked about funding issues and unplanned outcomes of the programme, such as athlete drop-out from sport in favour of other interests, as potential risks of providing the programme to athletes.

Practical issues focused on the limited human resources that the IIS had for athlete support, a lack of a staff development programme, and systematic clarifications for retiring athletes in the carding scheme, which is the IIS's selection criterion for their lifestyle support programme. One of the external advisory programme development group members, who used to be a former athlete and was a current chair of another national sport organisation, showed his concern about the limited human resources. He said:

...there is not many staff. So, the output from the staff that they have, it's enormous, but if someone went out of the action tomorrow because he is sick [or] whatever, there is no one really to take their place...

One of the programme providers was also aware of the lack of human resources. He said, "...if this becomes the programme for thousands of athletes then it needs to be 10 of me and 10 of the other providers (laugh), if we are going to provide [the] right level of service...". Concern about the extent of available human resources was also

expressed by other external programme development group members.

Programme providers were aware of the need for staff training, in terms of supporting athletes, but they said there was no formal training programme. One of the programme providers said, "...there is no formal skills training, at the moment there is no professional development [for staff]". Another programme provider also talked about staff training. He said, "...the organisation does not allow us to do training development [because] we are not permanent staff".

Participants suggested that athletes' and coaches' resistance or negative attitudes towards considering retirement or involvement in outside sport activities while actively competing could be a limitation to the athlete support programme. A former player, who benefited from the pilot programme, admitted that he did not engage with the athlete lifestyle programme while he was actively competing. He said, "I never really kind of came on to that [the current lifestyle] programme, in terms of getting support as an athlete". In addition, two programme providers and a performance service director also showed concerns regarding athletes' attitudes toward discussing their retirement. A performance service director said, "...athletes often don't want to talk about retirement...they try to avoid thinking about it [retirement]". He also added that coaches' resistance was based on their focus on athletes' performance. He said, "...coaches who are arguing everything has to be performance and performance only if there is a strategy". External advisory programme development group members' feedback report for the first programme outline also indicated the need to plan for coaches' resistance to supporting athletes with outside sport activities because coaches might not like the idea of athletes being distracted by other activities.

Some of the participants who were programme providers talked about the carding scheme, which was the basic criterion for selecting accredited athletes for the current

lifestyle programme. As the carding scheme was based on athletes' performance outcomes and enhancement, criteria for accreditation could have limitations in terms of helping retiring and retired athletes. A performance service director expressed such concerns. He said, "If they [athletes] didn't hit the criteria, their funding was stopped...we had no criteria for working with those athletes...we were reluctant to create new criteria when there is also an existing set of criteria for funding". Some of the external programme development group members also showed their concerns regarding the carding scheme in the feedback report, because the majority of athletes could lose their carding accreditation by the time their sport careers ended (e.g., injuries, underperformance). The external programme development group members questioned the IIS's strategies for dealing with athletes who lost their accreditation near or during their retirement period and suggested the need to clarify action plans.

Regarding potential risks, people from the IIS perceived funding cuts based on political policy as one of the major risks in providing the athlete retirement programme. One of the programme providers said:

...because the value isn't tangible...you are always at risk of not being funded...we are limited by money because we haven't got a track record that we can put something on the table to say "This is [the] worth". And it is a longer term project...

A programme development manager also talked about the potential negative impact of changes in government policies, "...the attitudes of the people who make strategic decisions about Irish sport...that could be a limiting factor... the politicians".

As another risk, a national team coach and a performance service director mentioned that the programme could result in athletes' changes in priority from sports to other areas through programme involvement, loss of athletic passion, and loss

through leaving sport. For instance, "...athletes get so excited about another path in what they are doing that they actually want to be a computer programmer instead of being an athlete."

6.3.2.3 Potential solutions. When participants discussed potential limitations or risks they also talked about potential solutions. Participants considered marketing a performance agenda, providing online services, developing a staff training programme, and adding criteria for the new programme to the carding scheme as potential solutions to the above limitations and risks. One of the most frequently mentioned solutions was marketing. People from the IIS considered that marketing a performance agenda to coaches, athletes, and decision-makers (e.g., politicians) may have a positive impact on some of the limitations and risks, such as athletes' and coaches' attitudes toward the programme and funding cuts. The programme development manager said "...if we can offer something that can show you we can enhance this person's performance, would you do it?" A former athlete also suggested that educating coaches might be helpful in dealing with coaches' resistance, He said:

...even educate coaches a little bit more about the project [the support programme] and roles here, and what the institute is trying to achieve as part of that, and if they are aware of that...the journey [the retirement process] is little bit easier to make...

A programme provider also talked about the need to develop and use tools that measure athletes' performance improvement in such a way as to help convince funders retain the programme. He said:

...[what] we have got to look at carefully is creating something that is measurable [outcomes of the support programme], so that we can show to the Sports Council and the funders where we were...and this is where we

are, and this is the progress we have made, and this is the amount of cases we've dealt with and this is the feedback...

The final programme outline report showed that the IIS planned to have an annual assessment of the athlete retirement support programme, which aimed to improve the quality of the programme for the next year, as well as documenting achievement of the programme outcomes (e.g., performance enhancement, improvement of athletes' well-being).

Regarding a staff training programme, a performance service director, who was in the position to support programme providers, said that the IIS was planning to develop workshops and a training programme for staff development. He said, "...one of the consequences of redeveloping the model would be that we have the training data for this specific issue [staff training]...so, on-going training [for staff] is definitely [what] we need". In addition, the budget plan for the athlete retirement programme in the final programme outline report indicated that the IIS intended to spend 6, 500 Euros on staff training.

The IIS planned to deliver an online service to athletes to provide them with easy access to the programme that would help address some of the issues in terms of limited human resources, as well as provide long-distance support. A programme development manager said:

...an athlete online portal, where they communicate, participate with the supports remotely on one-to-one, lecturers, tutorials, tools, and CVs.

Because we only have three people, we need to build the infrastructure, an engagement platform that allows athletes to engage with us.

Regarding the IIS's carding scheme for the new programme, the people from the IIS added specific criteria to the athlete retirement programme. The final programme

outline report showed the added criteria for the new programme, which included retiring and retired athletes, under the existing carding scheme. The proposed support levels classified eligible athletes into four different groups, including gold, silver, bronze, and academy levels. Athletes' levels were to be based on their time on the carding scheme (i.e., gold: more than 10 years, silver: more than 5 years, bronze: fewer than 5 years, and academy: junior athletes). Also, the carding criteria for the retirement programme were based on athletes' overall contribution to their sports, not based on their current performance outcomes. In addition, athletes on different levels were to be provided with different services. For example, gold-level athletes would receive more support than silver or bronze-level athletes, in terms frequency of support as well as diversity of assistance.

6.3.3 Interventions Focusing on Psychological Factors

The results indicated that participants were aware of the need for psychological support to assist athletes' healthy career transitions, and the IIS intended to address psychological issues (e.g., identity, emotional responses, and awareness of transferable skills) with life skill development interventions and proactive and reactive support. More specifically, the programme focuses on helping athletes to develop a balanced identity between sport and non-sport activities through providing time management skill training. Also, the IIS aimed to develop athletes' positive self-image non-reliant on sport achievement via stressing the value of their sporting achievement and transferable skills (e.g., perform under pressure, set and attain goals). In addition, the programme helps athletes build their readiness for retirement through life skills development and education support programmes. The programme also provides counselling sessions with professional counsellors if athletes experience serious negative emotions or psychological problems.

Proactive and reactive support

	Pre-retirement support (Athletes aged over 25 years/ Active athletes)	Immediate retirement support (Retiring athletes)	Post-retirement support (Retired athletes)
Development interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on athletes' overall life skills development • Focusing on performance agenda • Long-term career and financial planning • Time management • Monitoring athletes' motivation through one-to-one sessions • Considering individual differences • Providing higher education opportunities • Balance of life between athletic and non-athletic activities • Developing athletes' multiple identities • Developing athletes' social skills • Identifying potential risk of post-sport life adjustment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping positive self-image (self-esteem/self-worth) without their sport • Building readiness for retirement • Career coaching consultations • Providing non-athletic career opportunities • Post-sport career plans • CV writing • Interview skills • Developing transferable skills • Time management • Keeping athletes' sense of control in retirement decision-making • Analysing psychological and emotional status • Counselling sessions with psychologists (if necessary) • Using athletes' social support networks • Mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysing psychological and emotional status • Counselling sessions with psychologists (if necessary) • Providing opportunities for giving back • A career in sport- showcase career options in sport • CV writing • Interview skills • Career plans • Using athletes' social support networks • Athlete award ceremony
Potential outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of being supported • Sense of competence • Reducing concerns and worries of their future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of positive self-image • Sense of being supported • Feeling of control over retirement • Reducing concerns and worries of their future • Sense of goals and directions for their post-sport lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of being supported • Sense of competence • Feeling of self-worth (through giving back activities) • Sense of goals and directions for their future

Figure 6. 1. The IIS's psychological intervention strategies for the athlete retirement programme,

Regarding life skill development interventions, the aims of the athlete retirement support programme paralleled the purpose of the current lifestyle programme to enhance athletes' sport performance and subjective well-being. The athlete retirement support programme contains interventions focused on athletes' individual development, including helping athletes to increase their transferable skills and develop their time management skills and social skills, and supporting athletes' educational and vocational development.

To deliver proactive and reactive support, people from the IIS intended to provide psychological interventions over time to support athletes' retirement, as career transition have been considered a process rather than a singular event by researchers (e.g., Wylleman et al., 2004). The final programme outline report and interviews revealed that the IIS developed a three stage action plan to assist athletes' career transitions connected to the current programmes (e.g., education programme), including pre-retirement, immediate retirement, and post-retirement support. More specifically, both pre-retirement and immediate retirement stages were to be proactive interventions through supporting active athletes' and retiring athletes' career transition plans. Interventions were planned to be delivered to athletes in various form, such as one-to-one consultation sessions, group workshops, and showcase events. Participants also discussed athletes' potential psychological benefits from engaging with the support programme during their athletic time, as well as during their career transition, such as enhancing self-confidence for non-sporting activities and a sense of goals and direction for post-sport lives.

The above two themes (i.e., life skill development interventions and proactive and reactive support) are reciprocal and interrelated. Figure 6.1 (p. 199) was developed to categorise the IIS's athlete retirement support programme interventions focused on

addressing psychological issues. The results are presented according to how the programme is delivered to athletes over time (i.e., pre, immediate, and post-retirement programme).

6.3.3.1 Pre-retirement support programme. The final programme outline report indicated that the athletes targeted for a pre-retirement support programme were eligible active athletes (gold, silver, and bronze levels), aged over 25. Interventions focused on athletes' overall life skills development, and the IIS tried to approach active athletes with a performance agenda. Interventions in this stage include life skills development (developing long-term career planning), education support (focusing on wider career/employment potential), employment support (providing opportunities to access flexible employment), and athlete passport review (identifying potential risks of post-sport life adjustment). The aims of the interventions in the pre-retirement stage were to develop athletes' overall life skills, increase their competence through engaging with outside sport activities, and identify individuals' potential risks in post-sport life adjustment.

When participants talked about the pre-retirement programme, they discussed the need for proactive interventions to support athletes' career transitions. A programme provider said:

We are reactive [in the current programme], we are just managing the process of retirement, we are not preventing by processing...the way we are developing the [retirement] programme, we want to start when they are younger, so we are being proactive to assist their development. So, they will be better able to cope with whatever comes their way.

Programme providers also explained how they approached athletes in the initial stage of the intervention, including analysing athletes' psychological status, monitoring, and

encouraging athletes' involvement in the programme through one-to-one sessions. A programme development manager said, "...the initial checks are obviously surrounding their [athletes'] psychological status...get them to identify what is their purpose, why are they here...what are the things they value..." In addition, activities (e.g., awareness of transferable skills, value of athletic achievement) during one-to-one sessions between athletes and service providers contained strategies to help enhance athletes' self-esteem by identifying reasons for a positive self-image and their abilities. A current national team coach discussed the potential beneficial outcomes of being aware of transferable skills. He said:

What skills athletes have is exactly what workforces need...they have these skills already, they don't know that they have them...to help them, we need to express to them this is what you have, this is what the business world is looking for, and you have that [skills]...then they can have higher self-esteem...

The final programme outline report suggested providing higher education as one of the strategies to change active athletes' behaviours and cognitions by having other interests outside sport and pursuing individual development. Participants considered that athletes' involvement in higher education while actively competing might bring positive influences on both athletes' performance and their preparation for post-sport life. One of the programme providers said:

...education is a good, positive distraction away from their sport...because they get down time or even a physical break because they feel they should be training more. So, they over-train and get injured. So, I think, it [education] can be a performance enhancer.

A current national team coach also supported the idea of using education to support

athletes, "...because being an athlete is a very boring time, there is a lot of time that you are just doing your training and nothing much else...life is pretty still...so, having something else can help to enhance training". In addition, participants expected positive psychological outcomes from athletes engaging with their student roles.

A programme development manager discussed potential benefits of athletes' lifestyle changes and the IIS's strategies to develop athletes' multiple identities as rounded individuals rather than becoming exclusively focused on being an athlete through their involvement in outside sport activities. He said: "...when you exit your sport career 360° as a whole person, you are a complete individual, because you had the education, and the employment and that is the vision we want to sell to athletes". The final programme outline report showed that the programme aimed to help athletes to become rounded people: "Destination: 360° success...athletes have experienced multidimensional development and are enabled to transfer their key athlete skills, experiences, and knowledge into a second career path" (The final programme outline report, 2010, p. 10).

Another outcome the IIS tried to address in the new programme was athletes' social skills development, which was closely related to their balance of life. One of the programme providers discussed the importance of spending time with close others for athletes and social skills development. He said:

...you need social time, you need a support network of friends and family that you spend some time with, then you can offload some [of your] problems, and share [the] workload whoever that would be...developing skills to deal with social pressure is a big step...

The programme providers also described the use of athletes' social networks to deliver the programme. A programme provider said, "...we sit down with the coach, athletes,

and parents, whoever else is involved at whatever stages, so that they understand that the pressure is around”.

Regarding potential psychological benefits, participants described “feelings of being supported, sense of competence, and reducing concerns and worries for their future” as positive outcomes of active athletes’ involvement in the programme. A performance service director said, “They [athletes] can actually see that we [the IIS] are looking after them in the long term and that will make a win-win situation...”

In addition, the final programme outline report stated that one of the aims of the pre-retirement support programme was to identify athletes’ potential risks in post-sport life adjustment and identify connections with the next stage, which is the immediate retirement support programme.

6.3.3.2 Immediate retirement support programme. The second retirement support stage in the final programme outline report was planned for athletes (gold, silver, and bronze levels) close to retirement and retiring athletes. Interventions in this stage can be divided into three major areas, including career exit support (e.g., post-sport career plans, job searching), group workshops with athletes who are in similar positions, and counselling sessions focusing on emotional and psychological responses to career transition. The support in the immediate retirement stage aimed to develop athletes’ overall readiness for retirement, including vocational and psychological readiness, through continuation of pre-retirement support and interventions which focused on retirement issues. In addition, participants discussed how the IIS aimed to help athletes have perceived control over their retirement through developing a fair athlete selection process (providing information about athlete selection criteria) and providing progress information (e.g., performance outcome report) to athletes. Finally, they also talked about social support systems, including athletes’ social support

networks, support from former athletes through mentoring, and reciprocal support between retiring athletes.

The programme in this stage aims to help athletes keep their positive self-image without their sport through having interests outside sport. A performance service director talked about the importance of having interests outside of sport among athletes in both pre-retirement and retiring stages. He said:

...from a psychological perspective, to have an identity and self-esteem that is entirely based on performance can be a potential problem. So, having a more rounded identity where they [athletes] have achieved in different areas also helps to protect their [athletes'] self-esteem, and potentially see them through the times when their sport isn't going so well.

Another between the pre and immediate retirement support programme was building athletes' readiness for retirement. In pre-retirement support, interventions aimed to develop athletes' overall life skills and balance of life (e.g., time management), but for retiring athletes, services focused on building readiness for retirement (e.g., searching for post-sport careers). A current national team coach discussed how the intervention might influence athletes' readiness for retirement over time. He said:

...you can also educate them about emotional stuff that should be involved...the programme can make them feel prepared, not just decide, someday they are going to finish...this is happening over a period of time...it allows your body time to adapt to it, get used to it and to prepare yourself mentally.

Since vocational concerns post-sport are one of the major sources of stress for retiring athletes (e.g., Lotysz & Short, 2004; Marthinus, 2007; Petitipas et al., 1992), and are also related to athletes' readiness for retirement, one of the interventions was

focused on athletes' vocational support. The vocational support was planned to help athletes in various ways, such as career exit consultations (e.g., assessing athletes' immediate needs), career exit interviews (debriefing sessions between athletes and the IIS), and career coaching consultations (e.g., identifying athletes' career goals). A performance service director talked about career support. He said:

...those benefits [from the programme] have to be tangible...like access to career counselling and support and help for the part-time job, not for the money necessarily but for the experience so then they can get a job when they finish [sport career]...so if we [the IIS] can provide some of those other tangible benefits then perhaps it makes something that it is an attractive choice [for athletes].

A current national team coach also added that the programme was planned to respect athletes' own wishes, provide help based on individual differences, and focused on each athlete's demands. He said:

...it [support] has to be individualized...that the conclusion itself, this is the route the path they [athletes] want to go, so, when they design the [post-sport] career paths, obviously, this is the person who is gonna do [that], so they design the correct career path for them.

People from the IIS were aware of how the process of retirement decision-making influences the quality of athletes' career transitions. Participants tried to respect athletes' decisions, and the service team intended to analyse reasons for retirement in one-to-one sessions with athletes during the retirement process. A programme development manager discussed the IIS's and national team coaches' roles in the athlete deselection process, as these could be related to athletes' sudden retirement. He said:

...if they [athletes] are going to make a retirement decision, we make sure

coaches have that conversation with the athletes about that decision, or the process of deselection is built on fair ground...[we] give athletes opportunities to retain control of the decision.

Participants also described that they were aware of athletes' potential negative psychological and emotional experiences during their retirement process and talked about their plan to assist with athletes' psychological and emotional responses. A programme development manager said, "...[in] my initial conversations with the athletes, when we do the need analysis, [we] talk about how they feel". The retirement support programme also included counselling sessions with one of the four clinical psychologists who work for the IIS, if necessary. A performance service director discussed what they expected from psychologists' involvement. He said, "...the psychologists are involved in delivering to the athletes to lead some of the workshops or address issues, which is related to athletic identity, transitions, and preparation, and dealing with post-competition blues...all issues would be addressed proactively..."

Participants also talked about the beneficial aspects of social support, both from the IIS and athletes' close others. To assist athletes' healthy career transitions, service providers planned to analyse and use athletes' own social support networks. A programme development manager said:

...another area which we are going to look at is social support. What is the nature of athletes' social support mechanism, their wife or husband, are they close, do they have a best friend, basically to get a real sense of what they look like...

He also cited the advantages of former athletes' mentoring support and reciprocal support among retiring athletes in assisting career transition. He said:

I think it [former athletes' mentoring] is a very important way of actually

enhancing athletes' self-efficacy and a sense of their future, because the athlete to athlete communication, peer to peer communication, is actually more powerful than what the Institute of Sport is doing.

Finally, participants discussed athletes' potential positive psychological outcomes through the programme involvement, such as the sense of a positive self-image, the sense of being supported, a feeling of control over their retirement decision-making, reduction of concerns and worries about the future, and a sense of future directions. For example, a programme provider said:

An older athlete who is still performing may have one eye on "What happens if I get injured and I can't go back?" So, if you can take that worry away and provide options for them, so, that they know "If I get injured or if I don't perform, if I don't qualify, I know that I am gonna get support in this area, and I can go on to develop this skill to be successful in my life after sport"...

A programme development manager also described the potential positive influence of the IIS support. He said:

...this is critical for building athletes' retirement experience, so when they do retire, they have got all these other critical supports around, they have a job, money, they have a sense of direction, they have a sense of purpose, and so it is a critical area...

6.3.3.3 Post-retirement programme. The post-retirement programme aimed to support athletes who were already retired from their sport. The programme was completely focused on post-sport lives and was called the athlete reward programme. The final programme outline report stated that "...athlete reward programme; athletes will be recognized for their contribution to elite sport" (the final programme outline

report, 2010, p. 17). The structure of the intervention was similar to that of immediate support, which includes career services and counselling sessions with both programme delivery teams and psychologists (if necessary). However, the IIS also added some other activities designed for retired athletes, such as an athlete award ceremony to recognize their sport contributions and a mentorship training programme for former athletes who wanted to be mentors of active athletes.

The final programme outline indicated that the IIS planned to showcase career options in sport to retired athletes to help them to find a post-sport career. A former athlete described one of the examples of the career support from the pilot programme.

He said:

...when you decide it [retirement], and you move away, you still have this area of strength, but you just don't know that sometimes because you're coming out of it [sport] and into the new world...so, I suppose to come into this project [the pilot programme]...it helps me shape where I like to go and ultimately get into a position where I could go and challenge to get the job that I have now.

Regarding athletes' psychological responses to their retirement, the post-retirement programme had similar interventions to the immediate retirement support programme, which could be considered as a continuation of the previous support, including clinical services. A performance service director said how they were going to assist athletes who have clinical needs during the interventions. He said, "...they [the athlete service team] are always making referrals to psychologists' services...we will probably develop some simple screening tools...which indicate whether somebody should actually have a referral to the psychologists".

The results revealed that participants considered retiring athletes as potential contributors to Irish sport, who can use their skills and knowledge to assist other athletes in various ways (e.g., coaching, mentoring). A programme development manager said:

...a final area of support would be after they have made the decision, which is very much focused on “can we get these athletes who retire to continue some sort of roles in sport?” Either as an athletes’ mentor, as a coach, or as an administrator, because if we have invested for 15 years skills, knowledge, expertise, and experiences and then could we possibly use that to reinvest those transferable skills to bring back to the sport, but if athletes’ decide they don’t want to do that it is OK.

To encourage retired athletes to get involved in assisting giving back their skills to the next generation of Irish athletes, the IIS planned to provide mentoring skills development opportunities to retired athletes if they wanted to be involved in mentoring young athletes in the future. The final programme outline report showed that the mentorship programme contains one day of training and four meetings a year.

One of the interventions the IIS considered providing for retired athletes was an “athlete awards ceremony”. The final programme outline report indicated that at the ceremony, the IIS would present plaques to athletes who had represented the Republic of Ireland. Participants discussed beneficial outcomes of the event from the pilot programme. A former athlete discussed how he felt when he had such a ceremony. He said:

I had a career showcase party, with all my family and friends and ex-teammates...it was a really emotional night, and everybody had a really terrific time...I have celebrated that side of it, it [my sport] has been always

part of me, and now I am able to move on to the next part.

A programme development manager also explained what he observed at an athlete's retirement ceremony, which helped the athlete to move on. He said, "When she retired, [she] had a night out to celebrate her career [retirement award ceremony]. It was almost like a ritual ceremony or funeral, the ending of sport and the moving on".

Finally, participants discussed that the potential positive psychological benefits from the programme at post-retirement stage might be similar to those in previous stages, which included a sense of being supported, a sense of competence, feelings of self-worth, and a sense of goals and direction for the future. One of the programme providers said,

...they [athletes] will [have] various focuses in their lives, which we perhaps give them the opportunity to generate, great optimism surrounds them in the future, great choice, a great sense of control, and a great sense of independence, which is really important.

6.4 Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the views of the people from the Irish Institute of Sport regarding institutional obligations and roles in supporting athletes' career transitions. Also, it set out to examine how these people planned to address the important psychological factors associated with career transition to assist their athletes when developing a support programme. The results revealed that participants had positive attitudes toward supporting athletes prior to and during career transition and considered supporting athletes' career transition as an institutional duty of care. The IIS's athlete retirement support programme contained two major approaches to psychological issues: life skills development interventions and proactive and reactive support.

6.4.1 Participants' Perceptions for Supporting Athletes' Career Transitions

Previous literature has discussed the obligations of national sport organisations to support athletes' career transitions (Thomas & Ermler, 1988; Fleuriel & Vincent, 2009), but no study has reported the perceptions and attitudes of people from the national governing bodies (NGB). The present study is the first study to provide the views and perceived obligations among people from the NGBs. These results extend current understanding by showing that participants were aware of institutional obligations to support athletes' career transitions, and they perceived that the IIS has certain roles (e.g., team selection, providing an athlete support programme) to play in athletes' career transition process.

Although people from the IIS had positive attitudes toward supporting athletes' career transitions, they also indicated that there were several potential risks and limitations at an organisational level. Similar to previous literature (Anderson & Morris, 2000), participants in the present study also showed concerns regarding funding cuts or changing government policies. In addition, participants perceived that athletes' and coaches' attitudes could hinder assistance to athletes, because some of them had negative attitudes (e.g., avoidance, resistance) to engagement with the support programme. Several researchers, such as Petitipas et al. (1992), highlighted that active athletes may hesitate to invest their efforts in individual development outside of sport, because such activities may distract them from their sport. Others (e.g., Anderson & Morris, 2000) have argued that athletic systems or cultures, which demand athletes' exclusive devotion, may influence athletes' and coaches' attitudes toward programme involvement. The current findings provided some solutions to athletes' and coaches' avoidance of programme involvement, such as encouraging and educating athletes and

coaches importance of embedding athletes' support programmes and pre-transition planning.

Finally, the people from the IIS considered that marketing performance issues could help to resolve many of the limitations and risks, including funding issues and athletes' and coaches' attitudes, because organisations tend to put sufficient funds into enhancing athletes' performance and coaches and athletes also consider enhancing performance as their highest priority. However, many of the athlete support programmes around the world (e.g., Australia, the UK) clarify that such programmes aim to enhance athletes' sport performance; there was little evidence to support such claims (Anderson & Morris, 2000).

6.4.2 Interventions Focusing on Psychological Factors

The IIS's athlete retirement programme was underpinned by a Life Development Intervention (LDI) perspective. The programme contained all three approaches (enhancement [preparations], [social] support, and counselling) which Petitipas et al. (1992) highlighted as being part of an influential lifespan developmental framework, and the IIS expected several positive outcomes (e.g., sense of competence; sense of goals) from athletes' programme involvement.

Previous research findings (Fernandez et al., 2006) indicated that athletes in different stages of their sport career had different views on their retirement, and the previous studies in the present thesis (Study 2 and 3) also revealed that athletes experienced different psychological or emotional responses during their career transition process at different times. The present results showed that staff from the IIS intended to provide different types of interventions to athletes in different stages (i.e., active, retiring, and retired athletes). The interventions aimed at providing both proactive and reactive interventions to assist athletes' career transitions through

developing athletes' life skills during their athletic career, building their readiness for retirement for retiring athletes, and providing opportunities for retired athletes to give back their skills. As the IIS's new programme was not implemented until the end of the data collection, it may be beyond the scope of the current thesis and the data collected, but previous research findings (e.g., Fernandez et al., 2006) and the previous studies (Study 2 and 3) in the present thesis indicated that providing different types of interventions throughout the athletes' career transitions process might be an appropriate way to assist them.

Although the participants showed optimism regarding the outcomes of the intervention programmes, they also showed concerns about the degree of athletes' motivation and effort in terms of engaging with the programmes. Participants stated that the effectiveness of programme outcomes might be related to athletes' attitudes and degree of effort in engaging with the programme because the IIS is simply a programme provider but athletes are the people who develop their life skills and prepare their post-sport lives. Lavalley, Jennings, Anderson, and Martin (2005) examined Irish athletes' attitudes toward seeking sport psychology services and revealed that compared with athletes from other nations (i.e., New Zealand, the UK, the US, and Germany), Irish athletes showed greater positive attitudes toward the usefulness of psychology interventions and more willingness to discuss issues openly with psychologists. It may be too early to assess whether Irish athletes are likely to have positive attitudes to retirement support or not, but the results from Lavalley et al.'s study might provide a good guidance to predicting Irish athletes' attitudes toward the athlete retirement programme.

The IIS employed Erikson's (1950) idea of generativity to provide opportunities to retired athletes to give back their skills to their sport whether as a coach or as a

mentor to active athletes for mutual (active and retired athletes) benefit, and participants reported some of the positive outcomes from their pilot retirement programme. Some researchers (Grove et al., 1998; Lavalley et al., 2010) have also discussed potential benefits of generativity in athletes' post-sport life adjustment, in terms of feelings of self-worth and involvement in productive activities. The idea of giving back could be a "win-win" strategy for both athletes and the IIS; however, to produce successful outcomes from the activity, the programme providers and athletes might need to consider whether athletes are ready to deal with their new tasks (e.g., coaching or mentoring).

Finally, although, providing formal retirement ceremonies has not been previously mentioned in the career transition literature, one of the interventions the IIS planned to deliver to retired athletes was providing retirement ceremonies. Two participants in the present study discussed positive outcomes of the formal retirement ceremonies for athletes' career transitions, such as enhanced feelings of accomplishment and encouragement in moving on to the next stages of their lives. Three participants in the previous chapter (Study 2) in the current thesis also reported the positive influence of their retirement ceremonies on transition. In the general psychology literature, Zeigarnik (1927) discovered that people tended to recall unfinished tasks nearly twice more than finished tasks and if individuals had high ambitions for the task, then their unfinished task recall rate was much higher than that of those who had lower ambitions (i.e., Zeigarnik effect). Zeigarnik concluded that the results might be related to feelings of dissatisfaction and regret. Harvey et al. (1990) suggested that the Zeigarnik effect might be closely related to individuals' searching for mental closure on a certain event or story, because people do not want to leave events or stories unfinished. Harvey et al. also emphasized that account-making (story-telling process) might help individuals to find a

sense of closure on a chain of events and understand their stories as finished tasks, because the story-telling process accompanies several cognitive activities, including remembering, analysing, and searching for affective reactions for the event. In their athletes' career transition study, Grove et al. (1998) highlighted the positive influence of attaining a sense of closure on the quality of athletes' career transitions and suggested that account-making might help to support athletes in seeking a feeling of closure. In Harvey et al.'s and Grove et al.'s perspectives, providing retirement ceremonies to retiring athletes could be another way to help them to achieve a sense of closure on their athletic lives and assist them to focus on their future lives instead looking back at their athletic careers. Future research is needed in how the effectiveness of assisting athletes in searching for closure following career transitions.

6.4.3 Strengths and Limitations

The present study is the first to examine NGBs' athlete retirement support programme development. The study explored people from a national sport organisation's attitude toward supporting athletes' career transitions and their intervention strategies to assist athletes' psychological issues. The findings contribute to existing career transition research by documenting organisational status and strategies to support athletes' career transitions, which have not been discussed much in the study area. The results revealed perceived insights into the influential factors for assisting athletes' career transitions and could contribute to an understanding of the organisation's position in supporting athletes' career transitions. In addition, the results might provide guidance to people from other organisations who want to develop and deliver athletes' support programmes.

The present study has several limitations. As the study was conducted with a small number of participants in one organisation, the results might not be generalized to

other national organisations or programmes. However, the aim of this study was not to generalize findings but to transfer knowledge. Therefore, rich information from various data sources allowed in-depth examination of organisational views and a psychological intervention programme and might help other organisations to reflect on and develop athletes' support programme. Another limitation of the study is that data were collected from people from the organisation and former athletes, but not from current athletes. It would be useful to examine athletes' perceptions, demands, and evaluations regarding organisational support, because the current athletes are potential users of the programmes.

6.4.4 Future Research Directions

Although many organisations in the world (e.g., the English Institute of Sport, the Irish Institute of Sport) state that their athlete support programmes aim to enhance athletes' performances and subjective well-being, there is little evidence of the effectiveness of these programmes. As the current results indicated that marketing performance issues could be one solution to the various limitations and risks (funding cuts, coaches' attitudes), it might be useful to examine the effectiveness of the programme in enhancing both athletes' performance and their subjective well-being.

Some researchers (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Woodman & Hardy, 2001) have discussed organisational influence on athletes' stress or performance, but organisation-related issues have not been examined in the athletes' career transition context. Examining organisational influence on the quality of athletes' career transitions might be useful in identifying organisational roles. If such roles and influences are known, it might contribute to assisting athletes' career transitions at the organisation level, in terms of reducing organisational stress for athletes' career transition process.

A few research findings (Albion, 2007; North & Lavalley, 2004) indicated active athletes do not often use existing athlete support programmes and the findings from the current study indicated participants perceived that athletes' attitude can limit the potential positive outcomes of such programmes. Not many studies, however, have examined athletes' attitudes toward programme involvement and how practitioners can encourage them to engage with the programme. If athletes do not engage with the programme, they cannot gain any benefit from it. To provide effective support to athletes, future research examining athletes' attitude toward programme involvement and ways to encourage them to engage with these programmes is needed.

6.5 Conclusion

The current study emerged from findings in the previous chapters in the present thesis and literature on the study area. The results from the current chapter answered some of the questions related to organisational support (views of people from the IIS) and practical issues related to athletes' career transitions (psychological interventions in the programme). The findings helped to extend the knowledge in a career transition in sport through providing the gaps and links between academic research findings and practical programmes in assisting athletes' psychological issues during their career transition process. For example, the results revealed that even if people from the sport organisations have positive attitude toward athlete support, there might be other variables (funding cut, carding system) to consider and influence on an actual support programme delivery. In addition, since providing programmes is interactive activities between athletes and programme providers (i.e., NGBs) the findings suggested that athletes' attitudes toward the programme involvement could influence on the programme outcomes.

Finally, the findings from the current chapter and all three studies in the present thesis (Study 1, 2, and 3) suggested that the final stages of athletic career could be a part of process of athletes' career transition out of sport, in terms of influences of the athlete retirement decision-making in their post-sport life adjustment. The results also indicated that providing proactive intervention to athletes could be effective to assist their career transitions. The following chapter will discuss main findings in the present thesis, which is influence of the athlete career transition decision-making process on the quality of athletes' career transitions.

Chapter Seven

General Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The main aim of the present thesis was to extend knowledge of athletes' career transitions through pursuing three specific objectives. Firstly, to identify the current status of knowledge through providing systematic review and suggest future research directions. Secondly, to understand Korean tennis players' career transition out of sport experiences over time and their retirement decision-making processes. Thirdly, to explore the Irish Institute of Sport (IIS)' processes involved in the development of an athletes' career transition programme focusing on influence of organisational culture in supporting athletes' career transitions and their intervention strategies for psychological factors associated with athletes' career transitions.

The findings from the four studies indicated that (a) although the study area of athlete career transition has grown rapidly for the past two decades, more studies are needed, including examinations of cultural similarities and differences, the retirement decision-making process, and practical issues; (b) athletes' career transition process began not after the retirement decision is made, but once they start to consider their retirement; (c) athletes considered their retirement decision-making to be stressful; (d) athletes proceeded through certain steps during their career transition (e.g., contemplation, preparation stages); (e) their readiness for retirement, their degree of athletic identity, and their decisional balance (perceived pros and cons) influenced their decisions; and (f) people from the IIS tended to have positive attitudes towards supporting athletes' career transitions, addressed developmental interventions for assisting athletes during their career transitions, and were aware of organisational influences on athletes' retirement.

Overall, the major finding from the current thesis was the influence of the athletes' career transition decision-making process on the quality of their transitions,

which represents a novel incremental advance on current knowledge. With reference to these findings, the present chapter discusses the conceptual, theoretical, and practical implications of the major findings from the previous chapters and concludes with research limitations and future research directions.

7.2 Conceptual and Theoretical Implications

This section outlines how the findings from the current thesis contribute to existing knowledge in the athlete career transition study area. The findings of each study and the components of a conceptual model of the athlete retirement decision-making process (Figure 7.1, p. 225), which has been developed from those findings, will be presented.

Researchers have deepened and broadened the investigation of the correlates of the quality of career transition and have examined a wide range of athlete populations. However, Study 1 in the present thesis indicated that future research needs to focus on cross-cultural studies, refining and identifying the predictors of athletes' career transition experiences, examine the career transition process by employing longitudinal designs, and examine organisational roles and influences. Study 2, 3, and 4 in the current thesis were based on addressing these existing limitations.

The purpose of Study 2 was to investigate the career transition experiences of Korean elite tennis players over a specific period of time. The findings indicated that athletes' perceptions of the voluntariness of retirement decisions were complex. Participants' decision-making processes took some time, and their decisions were influenced by various internal (e.g., a degree of athletic identity) and external (e.g., coach-athletes' relationships, post-sport career opportunities) factors. They also perceived their retirement decision as being one of the most difficult aspects of the career transition process.

Study 3 examined the athletes' retirement decision-making process. The results revealed that the process of athletes' decision-making is complex, occurs over a period of time, and proceeds through a number of stages. In addition, the findings showed the usefulness of the stages of change model (e.g., Prochaska et al., 1992) in explaining changes in athletes' cognitive activities and behaviour during the process of career transition decision-making.

Study 4 revealed that participants from the IIS had a positive attitude toward athletes support and their intervention programme included both proactive and reactive support. The findings also suggested potential influence of sport organisations in athletes' retirement decisions and the quality of their career transitions, in terms of organisational involvement in national team selection and the athlete support programme delivery.

To understand the career transition decision-making process which athletes have to go through during their career transitions, and to synthesise the findings of the thesis, a conceptual model of the athlete retirement decision-making process (Figure 7.1) was developed. The model is based on the existing literature (e.g., Diclemente & Prochaska, 1998) and the findings in previous chapters of the current thesis.

As it is mentioned earlier in Chapter 1 and 2, since none of the existing models provide explanation of athletes' retirement decision-making process, a conceptual model of the athlete retirement decision-making process can add details for the existing models. For example, even the majority of studies have focused on athletes' reasons for retirement and post-transition adjustment (e.g., Butt & Molnar, 2009; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000), there is no clear evidence or information for when athletes' retirement process initiates for them. In addition, although pre-retirement planning has been considered as one of the important variables which influences on the quality of career transition (e.g.,

Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994), process of short-term planning and imminent preparation during the final stages of athletic career have not been discussed much in the study area. The findings from the present thesis allowed to provide detailed explanation of athletes' decision-making process through a conceptual model of the athlete retirement decision-making process, including when the process initiates, what are the influences, and how they change their psychological responses and behaviours during the process.

The model contains three major components, including stages of change, influential factors for career transition decisions, and potential interventions to support the decision-making process. Each component is presented below, along with its sub components.

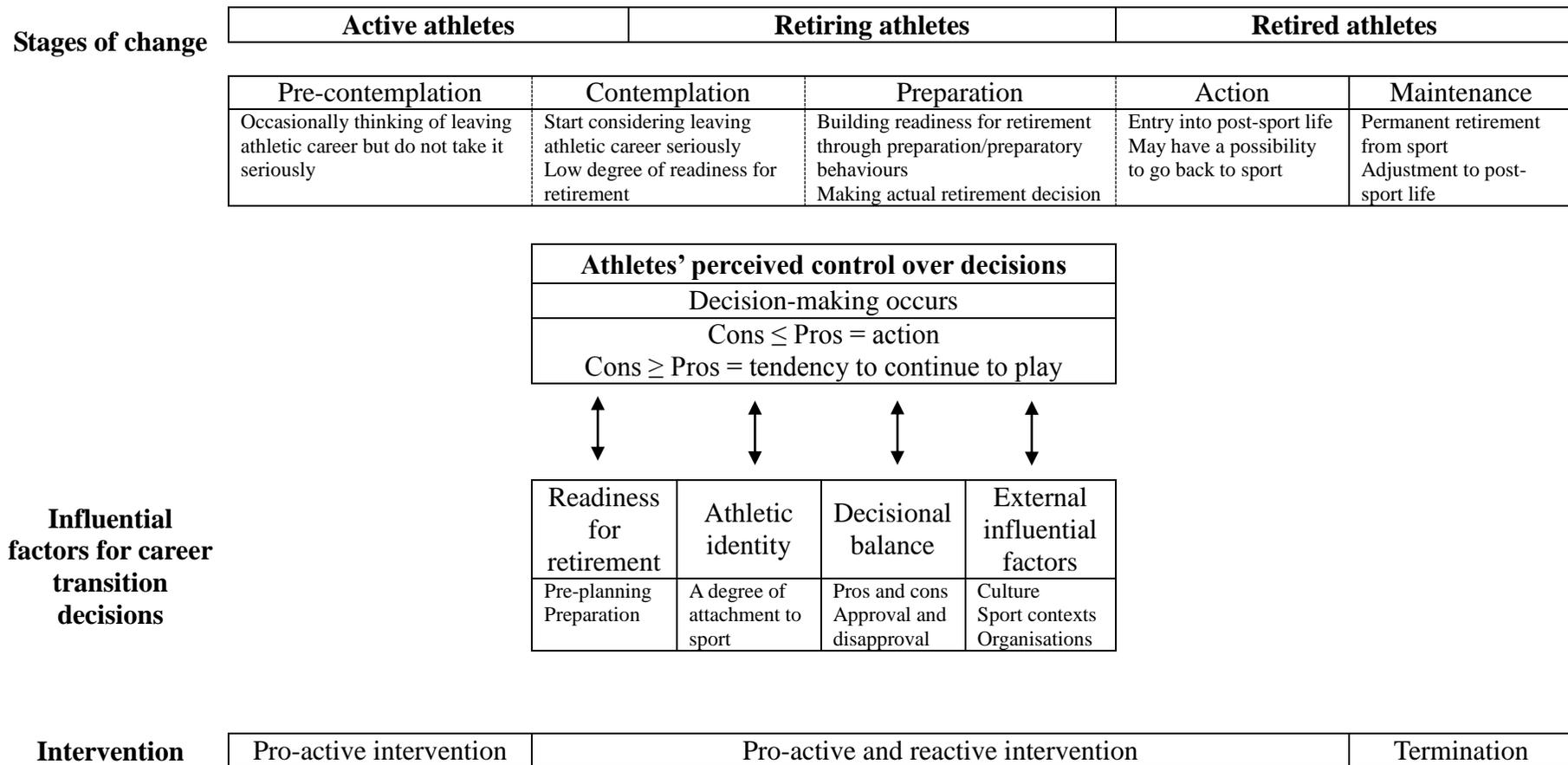


Figure 7. 1. A conceptual model of the athlete retirement decision-making process.

7.2.1 The Stages of Change

Most of the previous studies on athlete career transition have focused on post-sport career transition adjustment, whereas the current thesis focused on athletes' pre and post-sport career transition experiences. Through examining athletes' retirement decision-making process and cognitive and behavioural changes associated with transition via the transtheoretical model (Prochaska et al., 1992), the present results have contributed new ways of understanding the process of athlete career transition. The results indicated that athletes experienced several similar stages of change during the process as described in Prochaska et al.'s (1992) model. These stages can be classified as pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. Participants tended to have different views on, and attitudes towards, their retirement when they were in different stages (active, retiring, and retired positions). Also, their decisions were influenced by various internal (e.g., a degree of athletic identity) and external (e.g., socio-cultural norms) factors depending on the stage they were in.

Previous findings (e.g., Hale, 1975; Petitpas et al, 1992; Torregrosa et al., 2004) indicated that the majority of athletes did not consider or plan their career transition out of sport or post-sport lives while actively competing. The current results reinforced these findings and provided evidence of athletes' lack of preparation for their post-sport life adjustment (Study 1, 2, and 3). These active athletes' attitudes toward their retirement could be seen as being prevalent in the pre-contemplation phase in the stages of change model (e.g., Prochaska et al., 1992), which refers to a phase in which individuals do not consider any change in their behaviour. The contemplation stage occurs when active athletes had certain reasons (e.g., injury, critical life changes) for leaving their sport and began to think about the end of their sport career. During the contemplation stage, athletes did not show any obvious changes in behaviour, but they

began to weigh the pros and cons of their retirement. In the preparation stage, athletes showed preparatory behaviours and made the retirement decision, but actual retirement occurred when in the action stage. The maintenance stage could be explained as 6 months after their actual withdrawal from sport, when athletes showed some degree of adjustment to their post-sport lives.

The findings in the present thesis (Study 2 and 3) indicated that the period of time athletes spent at each stage varied somewhat, and they took as short as 2 months or as long as 3 years to complete their career transition out of sport. In addition, although some participants' responses were related to relapse, which refers to setbacks during the behaviour changes in the stages of change model (e.g., Prochaska et al., 1992), such relapse concept could not be clearly identified in the studies in the current thesis, due to a lack of information, including when and how the relapse happened to the athletes.

Overall, the present findings revealed that athletes go through certain steps during their career transition decision-making process, including psychological and behavioural changes. The model (Figure 7.1) shows how athletes' cognitive activities can change throughout their athletic careers, in terms of their perceptions and preparation for their career transitions.

7.2.2 Athletes' Perceived Control over Their Decisions

The voluntariness of athletes' retirement decision has been considered to be one of the most influential factors on the quality of career transition (e.g., Taylor & Oglivie, 1994). Some researchers (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Koukouris, 1994) have, however, pointed out that athletes may not have control over all aspects of the retirement decision, and the process of making a decision can be complex and multidimensional. The findings from the current thesis echoed Kerr and Dacyshyn's (2000) and Koukouris' (1994) findings. For example, some participants who had to

retire because of a chronic injury still claimed that their decision to do so was freely chosen. They claimed that the decision was not influenced by external forces, and they actually had a choice between staying in the sport through rehabilitation and leaving it. In addition, the present results revealed that although most of participants perceived their retirement decision as being voluntary, the majority of them experienced limited control over the process, because they had to consider various other influential factors, such as the timing of their actual leaving, various possible ways of preparing their career transitions, and their post-sport career choices (Study 2 and 3).

Recently, Stambulova et al. (2009) highlighted that the athlete retirement decision is influenced by various factors, and the process may take a long period of time. The results of the studies in the present thesis support Stambulova et al.'s statement, and reveal that athletes' career transition decision-making is often accompanied by various critical decisions, and a number of difficulties and stressful feelings are often present during the process. The current findings also indicated that athletes' control over their career transition decision-making might be related to many other influential factors (e.g., their readiness for retirement) rather than merely whether their retirement decision is voluntary. These factors are illustrated in Figure 7.1 and are also outlined in detail below.

7.2.3 Influential Factors on Career Transition Decisions

7.2.3.1 Readiness for retirement. A number of researchers (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Gordon, 1995; Stambulova, 2001) have discussed athletes' readiness for retirement as one of the potential influential factors on the quality of athletes' career transitions. Although some researchers (Alfermann et al., 2004) have hypothesized that athletes who plan their retirement in advance might have a high level of readiness for retirement, previous studies have not identified detailed aspects of athletes' readiness

for retirement. The findings from the current thesis revealed that athletes' readiness for retirement is related to their degree of preparation for their post-sport lives and careers, and how positive their views of their sport career ends are. In addition, the findings of these studies indicated that athletes' career transition decisions, including their retirement decisions, the actual timing of their retirement, the way they prepared for their post-sport lives, and their post-sport career choices were influenced by a degree of readiness for retirement (Study 2 and 3).

The results showed that athletes who had a higher level of readiness for retirement showed a higher level of confidence and more positive perspectives towards their post-sport lives and made more quick decisions than those who had a lower level of readiness for retirement (Study 2 and 3). The findings paralleled the transtheoretical model (e.g., Diclemente & Prochaska, 1998) in showing that individuals' self-efficacy is positively related to behavioural changes in the early stages of the career transition process. The results also revealed that athletes' level of readiness for retirement tended to be low in the early stages of their career transition decision-making, but was built-up over time through preparation or preparatory behaviours (e.g., developing vocational skills).

7.2.3.2 Athletic identity. Previous research findings have indicated that athletic identity is one of the critical factors related to the quality of career transition (e.g., Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Warriner & Lavalley, 2008). The results from the current thesis paralleled these findings and added the insight that athletic identity also influences the retirement decision-making process. The results indicated that athletes with a strong athletic identity experienced greater difficulties and stressful feelings during their career transition and needed a longer time to make decisions. One of the salient findings in the present thesis is that athletes showed a decrease in athletic identity after they made their

retirement decision, and not just after their actual retirement (Study 2 and 3). Recently, Lally (2007) revealed that student athletes' athletic identity decreased at the end of their athletic career and concluded that this decrease in athletic identity and changes in behaviour as a kind of proactive self-protection during the career transition process, in terms of dealing with potential identity crisis and feelings of loss. The current findings showed similar aspects even though the studies had been conducted with professional and semi-professional athletes. In addition, the findings from the current thesis indicated that athletes experienced noticeable identity re-formation after they had engaged with their post-sport careers.

7.2.3.3 Decisional balance. The concept of decisional balance refers to how individuals perceive the potential gains and losses that result from their decisions with regard to themselves and significant others. Decisional balance includes considerations of the value of self-approval or self-disapproval, and the approval or disapproval of significant others for their decisions (Janis & Mann, 1977). Gains and losses, and the approval and disapproval of themselves or others, appeared to be relevant factors in athletes' decisions in the findings referred to the present thesis, and are discussed below.

7.2.3.3.1 Gains and losses. When athletes started to consider retirement, they tried to discover the benefits and costs of their decisions. Some athletes saw the benefits of their sport career end, including them being free from chronic injury or physical pain, acquiring a permanent post-sport career, gaining control over their lives, and facing new challenges in other areas of their lives. However, other athletes perceived the loss of their participation in competition, leaving of a social group, decreased income, and loss of public attention as costs of their retirement, which paralleled the previous literature (Lavalley, Grove, Gordon, & Ford, 1998; Reid, 2004). Not all athletes considered the gains and losses for significant others, but the majority of the participants in the present

thesis discussed the influences of decisional balance on their decisions. For example, some of the participants postponed their retirement for their teams' and coaches' benefits, and others reported that they chose secure post-sport careers to take care of their family, rather than moving into jobs, which they really wanted to do.

7.2.3.3.2 Approval or disapproval. Approval and disapproval are considered as non-utilitarian influences in individuals' decision-making, and relate to internalized moral standards and ego ideals (Velicer et al., 1985). Athletes tended to show self-approval for their decisions both during and after retirement decision-making. The results indicated that self-approval might be related to both athletes' level of readiness for retirement and their degree of athletic identity, because when athletes perceived a high level of readiness for retirement and a low degree of athletic identity, then it seemed easier for them to approve their retirement. In contrast, athletes who showed self-disapproval for their retirement tended to postpone their retirement and stayed in their sport for 1 or 2 more years.

In addition, although athletes generally perceived that the actual decision belonged to them, they discussed that the approval of significant others (e.g., coaches, families) played an important role. Athletes generally sought their families' and friends' advice and support and wanted their approval for their decisions. In addition, the majority of the athletes reported that getting their coaches' approval was necessary for them during the decision-making process, in terms of getting support for their preparation in the final stages of their sport career, because most athletes were required to stay with their team until their contracts ended. Some of the previous research findings (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007) in the study area indicated that coach-athlete relationships could influence the quality of athletes' career transitions. The findings of the studies in this thesis also indicated that coaches might

influence many decisions that athletes made during their career transition process, including the retirement decision itself, the preparations, the actual timing of leaving, and their post-sport career choices.

Overall, in terms of decisional balance, the results indicated that if athletes perceived more pros than cons for their career transition then they decided to leave their sport, but if they perceived more cons than pros, they tended to stay in sport longer or even come back to their sport after their retirement. In addition, athletes tended to try to seek both self-approval and the approval of significant others for their decisions during their decision-making process.

7.2.3.4 External influential factors. The findings from the current thesis indicated that socio-cultural issues, the sporting system, and organisational factors influenced athletes' career transition decisions.

7.2.3.4.1 Socio-cultural issues and the sporting system. Recently, researchers have highlighted the need to identify the influence of the environmental or sporting context on athletes' career transitions (e.g., Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009; Stambulova, et al., 2009). Study 2 and 3 in the current thesis were the first to examine the career transition experiences of elite Korean athletes, and the results indicated that socio-cultural issues and the sporting system could influence the nature of athletes' career transitions. For example, some of the participants postponed their actual timing of retirement, even after they had made their decision, because their coaches in the team asked them to stay on for 1 or 2 years longer for the team's benefit. Participants in the studies of the current thesis discussed that listening to their coaches' or teams' requests and making compromises with them was common thing to do during their career transition, because sacrificing an individual's will for that of a bigger group and remaining loyal were widely accepted social norms in Korean society. These findings

might also be related to the unique sporting system in Korea, where some of the sport teams hire athletes as regular employees, and these athletes work for the companies, which own the sport teams after their sport career end as a reward for their sporting contributions. In such cases, athletes generally tried to avoid any kind of conflict with their coaches and teams, because they knew that their relationships with coaches and teams may not be much different after their retirement. In addition, the majority of male participants discussed military duty as one of the obstacles for them in continuing their sport career, as most of the healthy men have to serve in the military in their late 20s or early 30s under the national laws. Two of the participants reported completing military duty as their reason for ending their sport career. Finally, some participants attributed their indecision about career transition to a lack of a support system and a lack of post-sport career opportunities, which were related to the Korean sporting system and the post-sport career environment.

Although previous studies (Alfermann et al., 2004; Schmidt & Hackfort, 2001; Stambulova et al., 2007) examined cross-national issues and revealed some differences (e.g., age of career termination, athletic career satisfactions), the study area does not have clear evidence of socio-cultural influences on the quality of career transition. The current results revealed that athletes' socio-cultural issues could influence their decisions and the quality of career transitions by providing unique examples of Korean socio-cultural influences on the athletes' career transitions.

7.2.3.4.2 Organisations. The other major finding in the present thesis was related to influence of organisational culture and organisational roles in athletes' career transition decisions. People from the IIS stated that they were aware of organisational influences on athletes' retirement decisions. To reduce athletes' negative emotions and career transition difficulties, the organisation tried to provide advanced information to

athletes about team selection processes and to assist national coaches in establishing fair team selection criteria.

7.2.4 Intervention

The current findings revealed that athletes perceived that sport organisations have obligations to support their career transitions and expected organisational support in helping reduce difficulties in career transitions (Study 2 and 3), which paralleled previous findings (Herman, 2002). In addition, some participants expressed regrets at their lack of pre-transition planning and preparation while actively competing and attributed their career transition difficulties to a lack of preparation and available resources. Some of the previous literature (e.g., North & Lavalley, 2004; Petitpas et al., 1992) highlighted the low level of pre-transition planning among active athletes, and the current findings added that their feelings of being unprepared could be the source of their negative emotions during the process of retirement decision-making and career transition adjustment. These results suggested that proactive interventions for active and retiring athletes could be effective in supporting their career transitions. The model (Figure 7.1) proposes supporting athletes with both proactive and reactive interventions. Proactive interventions (e.g., developing life skills and balanced self-identity) for active and retiring athletes might support them in making pre-transition planning and building readiness for retirement, and reactive interventions (e.g., counselling, career assistance support) could help athletes deal with post-career transition difficulties (e.g., negative emotions, searching for post-sport careers). Finally, when athletes show some degree of adjustment to their post-sport lives and careers, which can be considered as part of the maintenance stage, then programme providers can terminate the support for athlete career transition.

Overall, the model (Figure 7.1) provides detailed explanation for variables related to athletes' retirement decision-making process. The stages of change helps understand when and how athletes actually initiate their retirement process and shows differences in athletes' changes in cognitions and behaviours throughout the process. In regard to athletes' perceived control over their decisions, the current model highlights complexity and dynamics of the decision-making process, in terms of interpersonal and sport context influences. Through presenting various influential factors to athletes' retirement decision which are closely related to the quality of their post-sport life adjustment, the model provides evidences of association between athletes' retirement decision-making and the quality of their career transitions. Moreover, since the model contains information related to changes in athletes' cognitions and behaviours, it can help to develop appropriate intervention strategies for different stages of the process.

Although the findings from the current thesis allowed developing a conceptual model of the athlete retirement decision-making process, the further verification is needed for the model. To test effectiveness of the predictions of the model, more research is required with athletes from various types of sport, different competitive levels, other cultural backgrounds, and who experienced forced or abrupt retirement.

To summarise, the findings from the current thesis extend the existing literature by explaining athletes' career transition decision-making process and the influence of athletes' career transition decision-making on the quality of their career transitions. In addition, the results provide appropriate intervention strategies to support athletes in different stages of their career transition process.

7.3 Practical Implications

Several practical implications emerged based on the finding from the current thesis and previous findings in the study area. These practical implications include

strategies to support athletes' career transitions and develop the athlete support programmes.

Researchers (e.g., Grove et al., 1998; Lavalley et al., 2010) have suggested a need to support athletes' career transitions through providing various intervention programmes, including life skills development, traditional therapeutic approaches, and account-making. Lavalley (2005) identified that providing interventions for athletes in career transition helped them cope with transition difficulties, and Study 1 in the current thesis also revealed positive associations between the quality of athlete career transition and athletes' intervention programme involvement. Although the need for proactive intervention has been discussed (e.g., Gilmore, 2008; Wylleman et al., 2004), the appropriate timing of retirement intervention programmes has not been discussed much in the literature. Study 2 and 3 in the present thesis are two of the few studies to explore the final stages of the athletic career and the process of athletes' retirement decision-making in detail. The findings from Study 2 and 3 revealed that the athletes' career transition process began when they started considering their retirement seriously (contemplation stage). Athletes discussed psychological and behavioural changes and experienced difficulties during the process. The findings indicated that it might be helpful to assist athletes' retirement from the early stages of the career transition process, and athletes may need different types of support in different stages of the process. Service providers need to be aware of athletes' needs at different stages of their career transition process (e.g., preparation, action) or different issues (e.g., emotional responses, career issues) regarding transition difficulties and deliver tailored services to assist athletes' career transitions. For example, practitioners might assist athletes in the pre-contemplation stage via encouraging them to engage with pre-retirement planning, and in the contemplation stage, practitioners might lead athletes to consider the pros and

cons of their sport career end and provide the ideas of decisional balance, self-re-evaluation, and environmental re-evaluation. In the preparation stage, as athletes focus on preparing for their post-sport lives via using active coping, practitioners might support athletes with counter-conditioning, social liberation, and self-liberation, as well as discussing potential outcomes of actual retirement and advancing the postponement of retirement. In the action stage, as athletes tended to use more emotional-focused coping strategies than in the earlier stages, practitioners might consider focusing on athletes' emotional changes and encourage them to use helping relationships.

Previous literature (e.g., North & Lavallee, 2004; Petitpas et al., 1992) highlighted athletes' lack of consideration for their pre-transition planning and their avoidance of engaging in other activities outside sport. The current findings also showed that athletes did not consider planning for their post-sport lives while in the early years of competition (Study 2 and 3), and athletes' resistance to involvement in support programmes could limit possible positive outcomes of the athlete support (Study 4). The results showed that some athletes were simply not aware of the importance of pre-transition planning in the adjustment to post-sport life, and others were influenced by social pressure from coaches' and other people's expectations that athletes should concentrate on their sport rather than engaging with outside sport activities. These results indicated that to encourage athletes to engage with support programmes, practitioners who try to provide proactive career transition support to athletes may need to educate athletes and coaches through pre-intervention meetings in the benefits of pre-transition planning and preparation before they provide career transition support to athletes.

Study 2 and 3 identified that readiness for retirement from sport, which contained self-confidence and decisional balance, appeared to be a main factor in the process of

athletes' decision. Examining influential factors for athletes' readiness for retirement and developing ways to build their readiness might provide ways to encourage athletes to make appropriate decisions in the process of their retirement. In addition, if practitioners are aware of changes in athletes' readiness for retirement, their emotional and psychological responses, and the coping strategies used through the stages, it might help them to employ appropriate strategies in each stage of the process.

The current thesis revealed that athletes' transferable skills could be beneficial for them during the career transition process (Study 2 and 4). However, athletes' transferable skills may be fruitless if athletes are neither aware of the advantage of the skills nor able to transfer them from one domain (sport) to another domain (non-sport). Educating athletes about the use of transferable skills and providing beneficial outcomes of athletes' transferable skills might be good ways to enhance the quality of their career transition, in terms of building their competence outside sport contexts and perceived readiness for retirement.

Findings from Study 1, 2, and 3 indicated that athletes' entourages (e.g., coaches, families) influenced both their retirement decision and the quality of post-sport life adjustment. In addition, social support was the most frequently discussed coping strategy among participants in Study 2 and 3, and more than half of respondents' social support networks included both coaches and others who were close to them. Identifying athletes' entourages' influences and roles in athletes' career transition process might be useful in assisting the athletes' retirement process, because practitioners could help athletes by educating coaches or those close to athletes about their roles and potential support (e.g., emotional, informational support).

The results from Study 2 and 3 provided evidence for the influence of culture and sporting system on athletes' career transitions, such as social norms in Korean society,

the influence of military duties, and athletes' positions as regular employees in their career transition experiences. To provide appropriate support to athletes, practitioners may need to understand athletes' environmental factors, including cultural norms, the sporting system, environmental obstacles, and organisational influences.

Finally, if a sport organisation tries to develop an athletes' support programme, it may be useful to examine the IIS's considerable limitations and risks, as well as their attitude toward supporting athletes, in terms of analysing their own resources and capabilities. For example, the findings from the Study 4 indicated that providing athlete support programmes at organisational level is not a simple task but a complex one, and there is a need to consider numerous variables (e.g., carding scheme, funding issues, and staff training), and therefore, if an organisation wants to develop athletes' programmes, then these variables identified by the current thesis should be considered in the early stages of the programme development.

7.4 Limitations

The delimitation of the current thesis was specific inclusion criteria and purposeful sampling. In addition, since the studies were conducted with a small number of participants from homogeneous groups, it contained limitations to generalise the findings.

Study 1 had certain delimitations in its inclusion criteria. Since the study included only studies written in the English language, Study 1 probably only can be considered as a representative systematic review of the athletes' career transition in the studies written in English. Study 2, 3, and 4 contained a delimitation associated with purposeful sampling. Specifically, participants in Study 2 and 3 were Korean professional and semi-professional tennis players, who were full-time athletes. As Patton (2002) highlighted, purposeful sampling does not necessarily aim to be representative but to

establish participant groups who can provide in-depth responses for the research questions, so the results from Study 2 and 3 cannot be generalized to other athlete populations who are in different competitive levels, or come from other sports, or different cultural backgrounds. Similarly, as Study 4 focused on people from the Irish Institute of Sport and their athlete support programme, the findings might not be generalizable to other sport organisations. The findings, however, provided an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, and it might be relevant in understanding other people in comparable situations.

Although Study 3 invited coaches to indirectly examine their influence on athletes' career transitions, the current studies (Study 1, 2, and 3) focused heavily on athletes' perspectives. Since athletes' career transitions are influenced by their support networks (e.g., Warriner & Lavalley, 2008; Wippert & Wippert, 2008), broadening future studies to include the voices of athletes' entourages (e.g., families, teammates) might increase understanding of the roles and influences of athletes' entourages during the career transition process.

To understand participants' ideographic aspects, each case was analysed individually (Study 2 and 4). However, there might be analytical dilution for each participant's story, because some of the themes which have not appeared across the cases had to be dropped in the cross case comparison.

7.4 Recommendations for Future Directions

Although the conceptual model of the athlete retirement decision-making process (Figure 7.1) was developed based on previous literature and the present findings, the model has not been systematically tested. To explain athletes' career transition from sport decision-making experiences through the model, the generality and validity of the model needs to be tested.

Athletes' control over their retirement decision has been considered as one of the influential factors on the quality of their career transitions (e.g., Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). However, some of the previous findings (Cecić Erpič et al., 2004; Kerr & Daycyshyn, 2000) and the findings from the studies in this thesis indicated that the athletes' retirement decision is a complex process which may take some time to be completed. It might be helpful in supporting the athletes' career transition process, if future researchers could identify the various dimensions over which athletes' have control or other influential factors in athletes' perceived control during the process, rather than simply focusing on reasons for their retirement because those various influential factors could be sources of their career transition difficulties.

The current findings also revealed some of the influential factors on the retirement decision (e.g., athletic identity, readiness for retirement). However, since the research area has been focused on athletes' post-sport life adjustment, variables like readiness for retirement have not had much attention from researchers. Identifying specific sources of athletes' readiness for retirement may help understand their career transition decision-making process and could assist in building their self-confidence through the process. For example, future researchers might employ Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory to evaluate and develop athletes' readiness for retirement.

As discussed in Study 1 and 4, only a few studies have examined both athletes and their entourages. Both the present findings and the previous literature (e.g., Chow, 2001; Muscat, 2010) indicated that athletes' significant others, including inside (e.g., coaches, teammates) and outside sport (e.g., family, friends), play important roles in their lifespan development and the quality of career transition. More research is needed to examine the entourage's influence during the latter stages of athletes' sport careers, because athletes' entourages are people who can provide social support to athletes

during the career transition process and influence athletes' various decisions (e.g., retirement decision, preparation planning).

The model (Figure 7.1) suggests providing proactive interventions to assist athletes' healthy career transitions. However, detailed proactive intervention strategies at different stages of the process have not been widely discussed in the literature. As proactive coping (e.g., life skill development, resource accumulation, and long-term planning) has been discussed as one beneficial coping strategy in general psychology literature (Schwarzer & Taubert, 2002), if practitioners can identify or develop athletes' proactive coping skills, it may help athletes act proactively towards their retirement decisions and their career transition process.

Finally, both the current findings (Study 2 and 3) and previous literature (e.g., Sinclair & Orlick, 1993) showed that some athletes come back from their retirement. Since the data from the current studies were not sufficient to examine athletes' return from their retirement, the results from the current thesis did not provide explanations for these athletes' experiences. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) revealed that athletes who came back from their previous retirement showed more dissatisfaction when they experienced their next retirement, in terms of having feelings of failure from the previous adaptations to their post-sport lives. In addition, athletes' previous experiences are one of the major influential factors on athletes' career transitions (e.g., Gordon, 1995). To understand influence of athletes' re-entry to sport experiences in the quality of their career transition adjustment, it might be helpful to examine the reasons for these comebacks and what pros and cons of re-entry to their athletic lives have been considered among comeback athletes.

7.5 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to extend knowledge of athletes' career transitions through identifying the current knowledge of the study area and examining athletes' retirement-decision making process and cultural influences in the quality of career transition. The findings revealed that the athletes' career transition decision-making process and cultural diversities influence on the quality of their career transitions and suggested a need to provide proactive interventions. In addition, the results allowed the development of a conceptual model of the athlete retirement decision-making process to help frame the athletes' career transition decision-making process. Based on these findings, practical implications and future research directions were suggested.

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Appendix A: Consent Agreement Form (Study 2)

Study topic: A Longitudinal Qualitative Exploration of Elite Korean tennis players' career transition experiences.

연구주제: 대한민국 테니스 선수들의 은퇴 경험과 과정에 대한 연구

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Purpose of the research

The purpose of this study is to understand Korean elite tennis players' career transition experiences. This study should broaden the understanding of Korean elite athletes' career transitions by examining athletes' psychological and behavioural experiences during the career transition process.

연구목적

본 연구의 목적은 한국테니스 선수들의 은퇴과정에서의 경험을 탐구하고 이해하는 것에 있습니다. 본 연구는 한국선수들의 은퇴과정에 있어서의 심리적, 행동적 경험을 분석하여 그들의 은퇴과정을 폭넓게 이해할 수 있도록 기여할 것입니다.

Processes of the research

Participants will have three interviews, either by telephone or face to face. Participants will be asked a series of questions focusing on social background, experiences and feelings of their retirement decision and processes, and self-identity.

연구진행

연구자는 연구대상자와 3 회씩 전화 또는 직접면담을 통한 개별 인터뷰를 실행하게 될 것입니다. 연구대상자는 개인의 사회적 배경, 은퇴를 결정하고, 실행하는 과정에서 느끼고 경험했던 심리적, 정서적 경험, 그리고 자아정체성에 대한 일련의 질문을 받을 것입니다.

Recoding of interviews and confidentiality

All the interviews will be audio taped. The information will be used only for the purpose of the study and responses will be completely confidential. Also, your name and personal identifying data will not be given with the information and if necessary, I will alter identifying details and use a pseudonym to protect confidentiality.

인터뷰 녹음과 비밀보장

모든 인터뷰 내용은 녹음 될 것이며, 녹음된 인터뷰 내용은 연구목적 이외에는 사용되지 않을 것입니다. 또한 연구대상자의 익명과 함께 인터뷰 내용의 비밀이 철저히 보장될 것입니다.

Risks

As a participant of this study you may experience some discomfort discussing your reactions to your transition experiences. If this occurs, the interviewer will stop the interview immediately and if you want, you can withdraw from the study at any time. Also, you may decline to answer any question.

위험

연구대상자는 본 연구에 참여함으로써 자신의 은퇴경험 중 유쾌하지 못한 부분에 대해 이야기를 해야하게 됨으로 인해 불편한 감정을 경험하게 될 수 있습니다. 이러한 일이 생길 경우, 연구자는 즉시 인터뷰를 중단할 것이며, 연구대상자는 원한다면 아무런 조건없이 언제든지 연구참여를 그만 둘 수 있으며, 질문에 대한 응답을 거부할 수 있습니다.

Benefits

As a participant, you may benefit from reflecting on your experiences. In addition, based on your information, a better understanding will be gained about athletes' career transition processes and improved well-being and welfare of post-retirement life. Therefore, you will contribute to helping other athletes' transition from sport in the future.

이익

연구대상자는 본 연구에 참가함으로써 자신의 경험을 통해 스스로를 비추어보는 이로운 경험을 할 수 있을 것입니다. 또한 당신의 연구참여가 운동선수들의 은퇴과정과 삶의 질 향상에 대한 이해를 도움은 물론, 미래 은퇴할 선수들의 은퇴과정과 은퇴 후의 삶의 질이 더 나아지도록 하는데 기여하게 될 것입니다.

Right to withdraw from the study

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Therefore, you have the right to withdraw from the study any time. Also, you can request the results of the study in at any stage, and ask any question about study to the researcher.

연구중단의 권리

연구대상자는 본 연구에 자발적으로 참여하는 것입니다. 그러므로, 연구의 어느단계에서든지 연구참여를 중단할 수 있는 권리를 가지고 있으며, 또한 연구결과를 요구할 수도 있습니다. 그리고 당신은 연구대상자로서 연구와 관련된 모든 상황에 대해 언제든지 연구자와 연락을 주고받을 수 있으며, 모든 종류의 질문을 할 수 있습니다.

I have read the above information and I understand the study processing and procedures. I agree to participate in this study voluntarily.

나는 위의 내용을 읽고 연구 내용과 과정 및 절차를 이해하였다. 본인은 본 연구에 자발적으로 참여하는 것에 동의한다.

Date(날짜)

Name(성명)

Signature of participant(서명)

*Data were collected while I was studying at Aberystwyth University, therefore, provided contact details were based on Aberystwyth University's office phone number and e-mail address.

Appendix B: Interview Guide (Study 2)

Demographics

Age

Gender Male Female

Nationality

Marital status

Status Professional Semi-professional

Competitive period

Competitive period for professional or semi-professional

World ranking: Top 100 101-300 301-500 501-700 701-1000 Over 1000

Voluntariness for retirement

Whole sport career

- 1 When and how did you start your sport career?
- 2 When did you decide to become elite athlete?
- 3 What were your goals and expectations at that time?
- 4 Can you describe some of your important/special memories as an athlete?

Sport achievement

- 5 How do you think your achievement and goals during your sport career?
- 6 How do you satisfied with your sport career?

Athletic identity

Encompass social

- 7 How other people see you? (Other people see you mainly as an athlete?)
- 8 Who are your friends? (Are most of your friends athletes?)
- 9 How much do you consider yourself an athlete?

Cognitive

- 10 What way do you think sport is important in your life?
- 11 How much time do you spend thinking about sport compare to other activities?

Affective

- 12 How do you feel about yourself when you do poorly in your sport?

Identity foreclosure

- 13 Have you ever give up something for your sport career?
- 14 Did anybody encourage you to do that?
- 15 How much do you satisfied with what you have accomplished?
- 16 What are the other roles and activities during your sport career?

Retirement decision

- 17 When did you make your retirement decision?
- 18 What made you to decide to retire at that part in time?
- 19 How did you plan for your retirement?

Psychological adjustment / Emotional experience

- 20 How did you feel when you made your retirement decision?
- 21 How do you feel now?
- 22 How do you expect that retirement from your sport would change your life?
- 23 What are the concerns and worries about your transition?

Coping strategies

- 24 How would you dealing with your transition?
- 25 How much support would you expect from others?
- 26 Do you think is there anything that could make your retirement better?

National Sports Organisation

- 27 Is there any kind of programs or help for athletes' transition from NSO?
- 28 In what way, support of NSO is necessary for athletes' career transition?
- 29 How it would be useful for athletes?

Searching for new identity

- 30 Have you decided what are you going to do after your sport career ends?
- 31 How do you think your daily life will be without your sport?
- 32 Do you have any interests outside sport?

Closing question

- 33 That covers the things I wanted to ask, anything do you want to add?

Appendix C: Ideographic Profile (Study 2)

Alex

At the time of the first interview, Alex was a 35-year-old. He is a married, former semi-professional tennis player who had played tennis for 25 years, and 13 years of his career was spent in a semi-professional team. Alex first considered retirement from tennis in 2006 because of back injury. At the time, his tennis team did not have enough players for next season, so he was asked to stay in the team with time allowed for recovery from his injury. He accepted the suggestion and spent 8 months in rehabilitation. When he came back from injury, he only played doubles events because his physical condition was not as good as before the injury. Although he came back from injury, he had thought about retirement every year since 2006, but his team's head coach stopped him from leaving. When he had the first interview, he intended to make a decision to retire at the end of 2008. Six weeks after the interview, however, Alex said he had changed his mind and decided to stay another year with his team. He added that the postponement decision had been made after conversations with his head coach and doubles partner because they were important people in his sport career. As he said, the 2009 season was his last year as a semi-professional tennis player and during that last year he could develop some vocational skills for post-sport life.

Throughout the 13 years of his semi-professional tennis career, Alex spent the first couple of years in the team dormitory, but after he got married, he moved out from there and lived with his family. While playing tennis, he never had any other interests outside sport and just stuck to his goal, which was to achieving sporting goals. He devoted himself exclusively to tennis. While he was actively competing all he focused on in daily life was his sport, and he saw tennis as a part of himself. He was proud of his high commitment to sport and believed devoting himself to sporting goals was the right thing to do as a semi-professional player. Alex also built his social networks inside his sport so his close friends were mostly former tennis players or tennis coaches. He said that he saw himself as an athlete and showed a high commitment to his sport until a year before his retirement. He also perceived that other people saw him as an athlete who was about to retire because of his age.

Alex started playing tennis when he was 11 years of age. Soon after he took the athletic test, his school teacher recommended him to play tennis. After a few years, he was selected as a junior national team member and he later made his dream come true, which was to become a Davis Cup player. He showed very high achievement as regards both his athletic performance and his life as an athlete.

Although Alex started to think of retirement because of his injury, he insisted that his retirement decision was made voluntarily. He believed that the timing of his retirement was his own call, but the decision still needed to be agreed with the team's head coach and his doubles partner because he wanted to keep a good relationship with his coach, and he needed his doubles partner to stay in tennis as he could only play doubles for the last couple years of his sport career. He attributed his delayed retirement timing to the team situation and confided that he could not just ignore it when team wanted to him to stay because of his high commitment to the team. He showed quite complex emotions about his postponement of retirement because he perceived that it had a negative influence on his post-sport life adjustment, in terms of delaying of starting a new career, but he felt responsible for his team. He also enjoyed contributing to his team as an athlete because the company which owned his tennis team hired him as an office worker after his sport career ended. He saw his postponement as a sacrifice and one of the obstacles to the post-sport life adjustment process. At the end of 2009, he terminated his sport career and started to work at the bank in 2010.

Alex's perception of himself had changed over time. He tended to decrease in athletic identity already 3 months before his actual retirement (the third interview) and showed identity shift 5 months after his sport career ended (the fifth interview). For example, after the end of his sport career, his focus in daily life was on his post-sport life and soon after actual retirement he seemed not to look back but forward by concentrating on his new and future life. Also, he saw himself as either a former tennis player or an office worker which is the same as other people saw him. He still said that his sport was important

to him, but it was no longer a part of his life but history, and he intended to use his sport as a tool for building new supporting networks through playing tennis with co-workers.

Alex's social network had remained the same until a month before his retirement, but 5 months after sport career ended, he talked about loss of contact with old friends, in terms of living in a different world with a different lifestyle, and he reported that losing old friends made him depressed. On the other hand, he also built some new social networks based on his work. He tried to broaden personal networks through joining the company's amateur tennis club and believed they could help his work in the future.

During the retirement process, Alex showed many different emotional and psychological responses. He showed more negative emotions during the retirement decision-making process both about feelings of leaving sport and facing post-sport life, but throughout the process he built-up his confidence and showed positive emotions as well. Alex expressed sadness about leaving his sport, difficulties in making decisions, fear of an uncertain future, fear of failure in his post-sport career, and worries and concerns about his new life. After he made the retirement decision he felt free and relieved. Also, he confided that even though he knew that postponement had had a negative effect on his adjustment process, staying in the sport field made him feel comfortable and less stressed. He also added that lack of readiness to face his post-sport life influenced on his continuing playing decision. In the last year of his sport career, actual work experience in the off-season and development of life skills helped him to build his confidence in his new career and readiness for retirement.

Within a month after retirement, he showed a much higher degree of readiness to face his new life, greater confidence, more positive emotions and perspectives than in the past three interviews. He was no longer attached to his sport and felt high satisfaction with both his overall sport career and his post-sport career choice. He saw his post-sport career as a new opportunity because since he started to prepare for it he enjoyed the challenge new things.

After Alex started to work in his new career, however, he experienced adjustment difficulties owing to major changes in lifestyle, work pressure, work stress, and problematic relationships with colleagues. He also showed concerns about being a breadwinner for his family so he tried to put up with the difficulties from work that he is facing at the time. He showed also unhappiness with his new lifestyle, which was sedentary and busy. He said that sitting all day in his office caused adjustment difficulties since he had exercised every day for the past 25 years. He discussed the greater lack of time with his family made him unhappy. In addition, Alex showed some negative stress reactions, including alcohol dependence and skipping meals, but he added that he was aware of that he needed some time to adjust to his new lifestyle.

Social support throughout the whole process was discussed, and Alex perceived quite a high degree of social support. He also seemed to be aware of his transferable skills, including patience, team spirit, working hard, physical strength, and mental toughness. Alex did not have any pre-retirement plan while competing, but tried to prepare through active coping after his retirement decision had been made. For example, during the final year of his sport career, he tried to develop his life skills, gained some information about work, and built support networks at work. As Alex mentioned earlier, his retirement process had been discussed with his head coach and doubles partner, and he said it was really good to have people who understood the process he was going through. He also spoke to his wife a lot about his retirement process and future career and valued her support. In addition, Alex reported that supporting former players who had gone through the same process made him feel much better in terms of gaining informational support and having role models. He also mentioned use of mental skills, such as positive reinterpretation and self-talk.

Overall, the reason for Alex's retirement was back injury. He had a long decision-making process, and the process itself was difficult for him. Until a year before his actual retirement he showed quite a high degree of athletic identity, but he showed a shift in identity throughout the process. After his retirement decision had been made, he started to prepare for his post-sport life, and the preparation seemed to help him to build his confidence about retirement. Alex was happy with his sport career and post-sport career choice, but he saw his postponement of retirement as a negative influence on his adjustment process. Alex showed concerns about facing post-sport life and handling a new career throughout the retirement process and experienced adjustment difficulties after he started his new career. Social network and support from others were most beneficial for him during the retirement process, and

he used active coping strategies to deal with his new career. Alex applied transferable skills to his new life, and found that they were useful. Finally, he also mentioned negative stress responses.

Christina

Christina was a 24-year-old at the time of the first interview. She is a former semi-professional tennis player who retired from her sport at the end of 2008. She had played tennis for 15 years and spent 6 years in the semi-professional team. She is from one of the smallest towns in Gang-won province and moved to Seoul when she started her semi-professional career. While playing as a semi-professional, like most other semi-professional tennis players in Korea, she lived in the team dormitory and trained with four other teammates. She had been training 6 days a week for about 6 hours a day.

Christina began her sport career when she was 10 years old. She was selected by a tennis team coach in her school and was attracted to tennis when she first saw others playing. She played for the Korean national team (2005) and in international competitions. She showed a high degree of satisfaction with her sport career, but perceived that she did not achieve her athletic goals in terms of failing to become a professional player. Her retirement decision was her own, and the reason for her sport career end was underperformance. She started working as a bank teller after retirement from tennis, a job provided by her former tennis team.

In Christina's pre-retirement interview, she often mentioned that her living environment or lifestyle as a semi-professional player was far different from "a normal life". According to her, she had a high degree of commitment to her sport and never had an "ordinary life". She also used the word "confined" to explain her daily life in the team because her team dormitory had restrictions on going out or doing other things. Christina was unhappy with the things that she could not do while playing, such as going to college or developing other life skills. She had never had opportunities to be involved in any activities or roles outside sport.

Christina's restricted lifestyle during her athletic career seemed to affect her personal network, which was limited. Most of her friends were former or current tennis players during her athletic career. Immediately after retirement, she reported the narrowing of her social network, in terms of no longer seeing her friends because of her retirement. Christina started to build her new social network outside sport, but showed difficulties in building a good relationship with people in her office. She also expressed feelings of isolation and loneliness after 5 months of retirement and a year after her sport career ended. Christina reported the loss of her friends from sport and other contacts because she was no longer in that environment.

During the pre-retirement interview, Christina showed a decrease in athletic identity after she made her retirement decision. She still saw herself as an athlete, but not as much as before the retirement decision and said that the retirement decision-making affected her athletic identity. She added that her close others also showed changes in attitude after she made her retirement decision. For example, when they were talking to her, the topics did not focus on tennis any more, but life after retirement or post-sport life. Christina accepted this was quite normal, did not have any bad feelings about the changes and simply felt that it was time to leave. After the actual retirement, Christina no longer saw herself as an athlete, but still considered herself as a tennis person. She continued her sport as a leisure activity and enjoyed playing. Also, other people saw her as a former player, and she felt comfortable being called a former tennis player. A year after her retirement, Christina showed shifted identity in that she saw herself as an office worker rather than a former athlete.

While Christina was competing, tennis was the focus of her life, and she showed a high motivation to be a good player until the very last moment of her sport career. After the retirement, she showed a shift in her focus to a post-sport career and life. At the end of her sport career, she slowly started to find other interests outside sport, such as financial concerns and developing life skills. After her retirement, Christina started to focus on the future rather than looking back, but did not have clear life goals compared with the sporting goals she had while playing.

Throughout the retirement process, Christina also showed changes in the perceived importance of her sport. For the first three interviews, which were pre-retirement, immediately after retirement, and 5

months from her sport career end, she said that her sport was very important to her because she believed that she had enjoyed playing tennis, and it made her who she was at the time of the interviews. In contrast, a year after her retirement, Christina said tennis was only one of the important things in her life, but it was all history, and she tended to put more emphasis on her current life and career.

Unlike Christina's ideal sport career end, which would have been leaving her sport when she was at the top ranking, she decided to leave because of underperformance. The first time Christina considered retirement (2007), she was in a long slump, and this led her to discuss retirement with her team coaches. Besides her underperformance there was another reason why she started to consider retiring in 2007. In Christina's team, there is a special contract between players and the company whereby the company which owns the tennis team provides a secure post-sport career. As part of her contract with the tennis team she could become an office worker after 5 years in the tennis team, and the year 2007 was the fifth year of Christina's contract with her team, so she could accept office work from 2008. When she spoke to coaching staff, her head coach asked her to stay in the team for another year and suggested she should develop life skills for office work. Not only was Christina's head coach against her retirement but her parents and most of her friends said the same thing, so she changed her mind and stayed in the tennis team for another year. During that time, her tennis performance did not improve, and she found that her physical condition was no longer good enough. A year later (2008), she finally made a firm decision to retire, and many of her significant others, including parents and coaches, agreed with her decision this time.

Throughout the interviews, Christina reported the influence of team coaches and teammates on her retirement decision. Under her former tennis team system, players had to play tennis for a certain number of years (5-6 years), and after that by agreement with the team coaching staff players stop playing and are able to take an office-based bank job. Reaching a compromise with her coaches during retirement decision-making was one of the important things that she had to do. The other issue which influenced her decision was about teammates' behaviours and the team atmosphere. After she postponed her retirement decision she had difficulties with team atmosphere during the training because she was uncomfortable and felt useless to her team, as team members treated her as a retiring player. She reported that she felt that it would be better for the team if she were not there. Christina was intending to develop some skills for office work as her head coach suggested, but she could not do anything because as a member of the team she had to do heavy training and had to follow all the rules of the team. There was no exception made for her so she only thought about preparing for post-retirement life. She neither achieved sporting excellence nor prepared for post-sport life during the postponement of her retirement. After 2 months Christina's retirement, she had a chance to attend a career workshop, which was provided by her company, and learn some computing skills before she started office work.

Christina showed mixed emotions throughout her retirement process, which included both negative (e.g., fears of uncertain future, concerns and worries about post-sport career, isolation, and loss of goals) and positive feelings (e.g., relief, feelings of freedom, and a high degree of life satisfaction). According to her interviews, most of her negative emotions were related to her post-sport career, because of her lack of life skill development and lack of social experiences. Over 14 months of the observed retirement process, Christina showed some transitional difficulties and attributed them to lack of life skills and preparation. Christina did not report feelings of loss regarding her sport career, but mentioned how much she missed her friends from the old days. After a year of retirement, Christina was able to shift her identity and progress the adjustment to her new career, but still showed difficulties in building new relationships with people from her new career, and it seemed to be delayed in social identity shift. Christina's positive emotions were more related to the end of her sport career, and made her feel free from all competitive tensions or stress. She recalled all the hard times over the last 2 years of her athletic career and expressed a high degree of relief after retirement without any attachment or regret. In addition, although Christina showed a high level of transitional difficulties in post-sport career adjustment, she showed a high degree of satisfaction with her post-sport career, in terms of having a secure office job, which she knew many others did not have. Christina also perceived a negative impact of having a secure job after retirement from an athletic career, which made her give up her sport career sooner than other athletes who did not have a secure post-sport career because she believed that she did not try hard enough to stay in her sport.

Christina's lifestyle after her sport career ended tended to change slowly in the first few months of retirement, but once she moved out from her team dormitory and started her new career, it changed quite dramatically. Living on her own was a new challenge for her as well as handling her daily life and new career. Compared with her athletic life, which provided everything just for playing tennis, her new life required many life skills, such as planning and decision-making.

As mentioned earlier, during her athletic career Christina did not make any pre-retirement preparation for a post-sport career. She knew, however, that she was going to have a secure job after sport career ended if she could contribute to her tennis team for 5 years, so she did not have any worries about finding a post-sport career and could obtain information from former players who had had the same experiences. She attributed a lack of life skill development and preparation to her restricted lifestyle in her former tennis team and admitted it caused her transition difficulties during post-sport career adjustment. Christina also added that a lack of social experience caused difficulties in building new social networks after her sport career ended, and she had a hard time dealing with her life changes (e.g., finding a flat, dealing with financial situation) because of a lack of coping skills.

In terms of her perceptions of her transferable skills as a former athlete, Christina seemed not to be aware of her skills, which she had learnt as an athlete before she started her new career, but 5 months after her retirement, she mentioned that team spirit was one of the most beneficial transferable skills from her sport career because she perceived herself as better at working with others than non-athletic new co-workers.

During her retirement decision process, Christina perceived quite a high degree of social support from close others and often confided in her boyfriend about stressful issues. Talking to someone who understood her situation well and always stayed by her side and listened to her helped her to reduce negative feelings. Christina also tried searching for social support, which included information support to deal with a new career and active coping, such as take action for financial situation and put more effort to learn her new career. In addition, since after 5 months of her retirement, she also tried to have a positive view for her current career and future based on perceiving progress of her work abilities. A year after her retirement, Christina seemed to adjust to her post-sport life and career, in terms of building confidence in her post-sport career and having stable daily routines.

In a conclusion, after a year of retirement, although Christina experienced some transition difficulties, she tended to adjust to post-sport life successfully. She showed quite a quick shift in self-identity through the process and was able to develop life skills and work skills through work experiences. In contrast, she did not show a complete reformation of her social-identity. Christina expressed both positive and negative emotions during the retirement process and showed more positive emotions for sport career end, and negative emotions were related to either dealing with post-sport career and life or losses of social networks. As time goes by, her concerns about post-sport career and life are lessening, but her narrowing social network has not improved even a year after her retirement. Finally, Christina used various coping strategies throughout her retirement process, including searching for social support, account-making, active coping, and positive reinterpretation.

George

George was a 36-year-old at the time of his first interview. He is a married, former semi-professional tennis player, who played tennis for 26 years, and 14 years of his career was spent in a semi-professional team. He had been considering retirement from sport for the past 3 years, but his retirement had been postponed because of his team's situation and his own attachment to the sport. He had the first interview in summer 2008 when he was considering retiring at the end of the year, but in the second interview he said that he had decided to stay in the team for another year. A year after the second interview, he retired from tennis, which was at the end of 2009.

George started playing tennis when he was 10. His father loved many kinds of sport, and recommended him to play tennis to become an elite athlete. George said that he could not achieve his major goal which was to become a national team member. Although he did not achieve the goal, his

satisfaction with his sport career was very high because he believed that playing tennis brought him a lot of joy, and he had never regretted being a tennis player.

George's retirement decision was his own, and the reasons for leaving his sport were ageing and the timing of a post-sport life and career. He started thinking of leaving tennis in 2006 even though he had not had a major injury or felt any external pressure. He thought it was about time for him to start a new life because he knew that he could not play tennis forever. It took longer than 3 years for him to leave his sport, however, which happened at the end of 2009, because of his attachment to his sport and because his team asked him to stay as they did not have enough players in the team. He perceived that the retirement decision was his own choice and believed that the decision better to be made after compromising about team and individual situation with team coaches. He had a very close relationship with his coach and doubles partner, and he wanted to contribute to his team as much as he could because the team was not just a "tennis team" but also his lifelong employment, in terms of working at the team's bank after his retirement from sport..

In the pre-retirement interviews, George mentioned that when he started playing tennis he was not interested in anything else, but just focused on tennis because he really loved it. In terms of how he defined himself, even though he had been considering retirement from sport for the past 3 years, he saw himself as an athlete because tennis had been a part of him and really important to him. Also, his surroundings saw him as a tennis player while competing, and he had many friends in the sport.

After his retirement, he started to work in the bank and showed some identity shift, including sense of self, sense of others, and changes in focus, such as spending more time considering his new career rather than his sport. Within a month of his retirement (the fourth interview), both he and others saw him as a former player, and 5 months after he left his sport, treated him as an office worker rather than someone belonging to a certain sport. His focus has also shifted since the final stages of his sport career the shift was slight at first, but after he left tennis, changes in his focus were remarkable. Soon after he stopped playing he started to spend most of his time thinking about his new career, including developing vocational skills, searching for informational support, and meeting people from the new work environment. In addition, he tended to concentrate on his current life and career rather than thinking of his sport because he believed that looking forward was a better way to adjust to his new life and career. For example, he put more weight on his current career than his sport although he still said his sport was important to him and he was a tennis man.

During the retirement process, George expressed various kinds of psychological and emotional responses. He tended to show more negative emotions than positive ones, and most of the negative emotions were related to his post-sport career. In the early stage of his retirement decision-making process, he showed a high degree of attachment to his sport and a fear of an uncertain future. He was aware that he was not ready for his post-sport career, and the lack of readiness and fear of facing a new life made him decide to postpone his retirement as much as his team coach's preference and his own attachment to the sport. After a decision was made, he felt relief and freedom because he had to consider many things during the decision-making process, including his readiness to face post-sport life, the team situation, and his feelings for tennis, and that was not easy for him. In the last year of George's sport career, he experienced some changes in emotions. He felt more worried and concerned about his new career over time and regretted his lack of preparation. It also caused self-doubt and fears. After retirement occurred to him, he expressed a high degree satisfaction with his sport career, was happy with his retirement, and felt no attachment to his sport any longer because he had tried as much as he could. George also showed satisfaction with his post-sport career, but was still concerned about adjusting to a new work environment.

After 5 months of his retirement, when he had worked in the office for more than 2 months, George expressed a very high degree of work stress that was based on lack of preparation and life skill development, which he had overlooked because he had devoted himself to his sport while competing. He had a few weeks of work training, which was provided by his company and was still involved in IT workshops during the last interview, but he found difficulty in catching up because everything was just too new to him. George also mentioned that the reality was far different from what he had expected so that made things harder. He showed a lack of motivation in his work because he did not have any feeling of achievement or challenge within the new career. George also talked about role confusion, in terms of

being there but not knowing what to do. All his concerns and worries tended to cause self-doubt about whether he could handle his new career or not, and he showed a decrease in self-esteem. Since George started to work at the office, his lifestyle has totally changed. According to him, his body has had active exercise for more than 26 years, but now he has to sit in front of a desk, so adjusting to a sedentary lifestyle is not easy for him. He also reported loss of physical strength.

George employed various kinds of coping strategies during the retirement process. He used social support as a coping strategy for the whole process, perceived a high degree of social support from others, and stated that support that he got from others was the most helpful to him, including talking to close friends and his wife, gaining information about his new career from former players, and being understood by close others. In particular, George went through the process with his doubles partner because neither intended to play without the other. He mentioned that they often shared ideas and concerns, and it was good to have someone understand his process and situation. After retirement, however, when he was experiencing many work difficulties he also showed the recipient perspective in terms of social support which means he saw a gap between perceived social support and its effectiveness. Through the process George also showed changes in coping strategies used and employed both emotional-focused (e.g., acceptance; positive reinterpretation) and problem-focused strategies (e.g., active coping; restraint).

In the first interview, he admitted that he had not had any pre-retirement plan apart from what he was going to do after retirement. He had decided to work at the bank, but had not developed the skills that are needed for bank work. After he made his retirement decision, he tried to accept what was going to happen to him and tried to face the fact that "retirement is inevitable". He knew that his lack of preparation influenced his postponement decision and caused fear of an uncertain future, so during his final year of tennis, he intended to develop some skills and collected more information about his post-sport career. In the 3 months before his retirement (the third interview) and immediately after retirement (the fourth interview) he mentioned that developing skills during the final stages of his sport career helped him to build his confidence to face a post-sport career. He was aware of transferable skills that he had learnt from sport and could apply to the new career. In those two interviews (3 months before and a month after retirement), George expected a high degree of social support from co-workers and used some mental skills, such as positive reinterpretation and mental preparation.

After 5 months of retirement and 2 months after he began work at the office, George expressed a high degree of work stress and talked about a maladaptive behaviour pattern, which was smoking. He attributed his heavy smoking to work pressure and stress. George tended not to get as much support from co-workers as he had expected, and the new lifestyle made it even harder to adjust. George perceived the skills from his athletic career (physical strength, mental toughness) were useless in his current career because they were not applicable and only caused difficulties in adjustment to a new lifestyle. He said he tried to avoid thinking about work stress so he goes to bed soon after getting home. He also mentioned that playing tennis with others helped him to feel better as did talking to close others. In addition, he hoped that he could endure all the tough times until he could adapt to his new life and career. George discussed how the interviews influenced him, such as how being asked questions about his retirement process gave him opportunities to about his post-sport life. Finally, he added that he wished he could have had some kind of support programme for retiring athletes to make his adjustment process easier.

In conclusion, George postponed his sport career end for 2 years. The postponement decision was based on several reasons, including his low degree of readiness to face post-sport life, his attachment to sport, and the fact that his team needed to him to play longer. George showed an identity shift from the final stages of his athletic career through to the adjustment process. He showed a high degree of satisfaction with his sport career, retirement itself, and his new career. George tended, however, to have many transition difficulties, including experiencing negative emotions and difficulties in adjusting to his post-sport career and lifestyle. Social support was the coping strategy that George employed most, and he perceived it helped him more than anything else through the retirement process. He also used various other coping strategies and showed a negative stress response as well.

Isobel

At the time of the first interview, Isobel was a 25-year-old. She is a former semi-professional tennis player who retired from her sport at the end of 2009. She had played tennis for 16 years, and 8 years of her sport career were at semi-professional level. As a semi-professional tennis player, Isobel used to live in her tennis team dormitory with four other players and trained about 6 hours a day 6 days a week. Isobel started to consider her retirement in 2008 because of back injury and had talked to her head coach about leaving the tennis team, but the coach convinced her to stay in the team for another year. So she stayed with her tennis team for 1 more year and retired from sport at the end of 2009.

Isobel reported that tennis was almost a family tradition, and her father introduced the sport to her when she was 5 years old. In the initial stage, she and her sister were taught tennis by their father, and she dreamed of becoming a world-class player. However, the competition was much tougher than her childhood imagining, and she could not achieve her goal of becoming a professional player. Although her dream did not come true, she said that she had quite a high degree of satisfaction with her sport achievement because she played for a national team and had really enjoyed the sport.

When Isobel first considered retirement, she could not decide what kind of post-sport career she would have. She could have worked in a bank as a teller, a job provided by her current tennis team, but she also wanted to become a coach. During the final year of her sport career, she decided to work at the bank because if she did not take the bank job then she could not come back to it later, but she still had the chance to become a coach later if she wanted to. So she took the job at the bank, and at the time of the last interview, she had worked there for nearly 3 months.

In the first interview, which was held in the first year (2008) when she was considering retirement, she said that tennis had been the centre of her life since she had started playing, and that did not change until the post-retirement interview (the fourth interview). Her entire lifestyle and emotions had depended on her sport, and she valued it highly. She said that she had never had any other interest outside sport, but put all her effort into playing tennis. She used to be told by close others "It is too much for you". For example, when her tennis did not go well, she could not manage her off-court life because feeling a failure in tennis had a negative effect on her off-court life, and all her concerns were about her sport performance. She confided that she knew it was bad for both her performance and her daily life, but it was out of her control while she was playing.

After high school when Isobel had to decide either to go to college or become a semi-professional player, she wanted to go to college, but her father strongly encouraged her to join a semi-professional team and try to become a professional player. She chose to be a semi-professional player, had never regretted her choice, and was happy with what she had done. During the pre-retirement interview (the first interview), although she was considering her retirement timing, she still saw herself as a pure athlete because her whole life had focused on tennis. Although her devotion seemed excessive in other people's eyes, she kept doing it until the end of her sport career, and her parents encouraged her. During the interviews, Isobel showed dependence on her parents. She mentioned her parents' influence on her athletic career, her retirement decision-making process, and her post-sport career choice. She also added that her parents and she mostly have the same opinion and believed that it was always worth listening to them.

Regarding Isobel's social life, she reported that she had never really had a social life or experience outside sport, but had just played tennis for the past 16 years. Most of her close friends were tennis players, and she did not really have non-athletic friends. Also, people around her saw her as a tennis player. Tennis has been one of the most important things in her entire life, and she believed that it was going to be the same even when she became old or abandoned her athletic career because she would pursue tennis as a leisure activity even if no longer a competitor.

In the post-retirement interviews, she showed a tendency towards identity shift, including some changes in sense of self, sense of others, and focuses. According to Isobel, after her actual retirement from sport, she saw herself as a former player because she was no longer a competitor, and others saw her as a former player (1 month after) or a bank teller (5 months after). Isobel still perceived her sport as an important thing even after retirement, but she focused on her new career. Tennis became a leisure activity, and the new career seemed to take her all attention 5 months after her retirement. Isobel still saw herself

as a tennis person, however, because she loved tennis and continued to do so. In her social network, she seemed to lose contact with some of her old tennis friends but not all. She had also built new social networks in her new career, including co-workers and customers.

In the pre-retirement interviews, Isobel tended to divide the sport world and the outside world, using terms like “Out there” and “New world”. In 3 months before her retirement, she showed concerns and worries about her lack of social experiences outside sport and was concerned about building new social networks because she had lived in the tennis world for a long time and had not had other experiences. Although Isobel seemed happy with her semi-professional career, she tended to regret that she could not develop other life skills during her athletic career because of the team atmosphere, which did not allow athletes to commit themselves to anything other than tennis. According to her, in a year of postponement, she developed some skills for her post-sport career and did some mental preparation with her coach’s permission.

After retirement occurred to her, she had 2 months break between her retirement and starting the new career, so did not report any life changes at the interview, which was done within 1 month of retirement, but showed big changes in lifestyle and patterns since she started to work in the bank. The last interview with Isobel was held within 5 months of her retirement, 2 months after her office work started. She showed very high satisfaction with her new life and perceived herself as well-organized and well-adjusted to her post-sport life.

Throughout the retirement process, Isobel showed various emotional and psychological responses. In the first interview, Isobel expressed unpleasant feelings about her sudden retirement decision, which was caused by her sudden injury. During the decision-making process she was unhappy with the lack of control over her timing of retirement because her retirement decision needed to be a compromise between herself and her tennis team’s head coach. Throughout the process, she also showed feelings of fear about an uncertain future, and the fear was based on lack of life skill development and social experiences. On the other hand, Isobel also presented feelings of excitement about a new life.

After her postponement of retirement, she showed quite complex emotions because the decision was made by her coach and parents rather than herself, so it made her feel unhappy, but she was excited to be competing in her sport again. After a year of postponement, her retirement took place at the end of 2009. In her interview within 3 months of pre-retirement (the third interview) and two post-retirement interviews (the fourth and fifth interviews), Isobel said that although the postponement decision was not really her own choice, it was good for her because she could obtain some kind of vocational skills (e.g., computer skills) for the new career and also felt a much higher degree of readiness to face post-sport life.

Within a month of her retirement, she showed complex emotions, such as sadness about letting her tennis go and attachment to her sport, worrying about a loss of personal networks, fear of facing a new life, relief, and excitement about her new life. In the last interview (5 months after retirement), Isobel still showed some concerns about her post-sport career, but she talked about more positive emotions and psychological status, including relief, freedom, fun in learning new things, achievement, and a high degree of confidence and motivation in her new career.

Throughout the retirement process, Isobel employed many kinds of coping strategies. She turned to religion and social support, reported in all 5 interviews, and she said she often talked to her friend about her concerns, worries, and plans. She had a friend who had gone through the same process, so she often spoke to her and exchanged ideas and information. Isobel mentioned it was good to have someone who had similar experience to her own because her story could be easily accepted and could be shared with the friend. Isobel tried to seek emotional, tangible, and informational social support from close others and perceived a quite high degree of social support throughout the whole process. She also showed acceptance of dealing with negative emotions. For example, when she had to face a sudden retirement decision or had to delay her retirement because of the head coach, she tried to accept the things that she could not control. She also tended to find meaning in her religion “That maybe happened to me because that is what my God wants me to do”.

Isobel also employed active coping to deal with her post-sport career. She could obtain some skills in the final stages of her sport career because she had already decided what she was going to do after her sport career ended. In the final stages of her sport career, Isobel tried to learn about her future career, bank work, and put more effort into learning and adjusting to it after she started it. Isobel also mentioned

several transferable skills that she could employ in the new career, such as team spirit, physical strength, patience, and mental toughness. She said these skills were beneficial in handling the new career. In addition, she perceived her sport career as an advantage in terms of building new social networks with co-workers because many people wanted to play tennis with her outside work so she enjoyed playing with them and broadening her personal network.

In conclusion, Isobel seemed to adjust well to her post-sport life 5 months after her sport career end. She experienced both positive and negative emotions during the retirement process and showed more negative emotions throughout the retirement decision-making process and actual retirement. After retirement occurred to her she seemed to focus on her new career and future life rather than looking back. Isobel presented a relatively high degree of athletic identity during her athletic career, but identity shift occurred soon after her departure from sport. In terms of coping strategies, religion and social support were those most frequently reported, although Isobel employed various other coping strategies as well. Finally, Isobel added that the interviews had helped her to rethink about her retirement process and post-sport life adjustment, and she stated the need for a support programme for retiring athletes.

Meredith

Meredith was a 29-year-old at the time of her first interview. She is a female professional tennis player who retired from her sport at the end of 2008. She had played tennis for 20 years, and 13 years of her tennis career were at professional level. As a professional player, she travelled all around the world to play tournaments more than 7 months a year and spent 6 or 7 days a week practising for more than 5 hours every day. Meredith began her tennis career when she was 10 years old. Her elementary school teacher recommended her to play tennis for fitness and to foster her early athletic talent. Meredith showed a high degree of satisfaction with her sport career achievement. She reached her highest world ranking at the age of 24. The year after that, she had a few minor (e.g., shoulder) and major injuries (e.g., low back). Her retirement decision was made by a personal choice, but the reason for the termination of her tennis career was injury. Meredith had had back injuries for a couple of years and had surgery in 2006. She tried to come back from the injury but could not make it and finally decided to retire. Meredith also planned to go to postgraduate school after retiring from her sport, but her application was not successful. She married a year after her retirement, and at the time of the last interview (a year after her retirement), she was coaching junior players in her previous team, which was the job she started 4 months before her retirement.

According to Meredith, since she decided to become a professional player, everything in her life had focused on tennis. At the time of her pre-retirement interview, she showed a high degree of athletic identity and saw herself as a pure athlete before the retirement decision, but she said it had decreased because of the imminence of her retirement. Immediately after her retirement, she reported uncomfortable feelings about her identity shift from player to coach. Meredith was aware of that she was no longer a player, but was still not sure of seeing herself as a coach even though many people did. After 5 months of retirement, Meredith said that she was more comfortable with “seeing herself as a coach”, much more than in the second interview (a month after her retirement), and everybody called her “coach”. Although she was coming to accept this as time went by, she said that being called “coach” still made her feel weird sometimes, and it continued until a year after her sport career ended.

Meredith added that when tennis became the most significant thing in her life, she never thought about anything else. Since she was young, she had no other interests in her life outside sport. Until a year after the retirement interview, she did not find any other interest outside sport other than her new career and had no interest in searching for one, either.

During her athletic career, she spent most of the time thinking about her sport. Even during the later stages of her sport career, she was still thinking of tennis more than anything else. After retirement occurred to her, she became a coach and focus on her sport did not change. After 5 months and a year of her retirement, time consumption for considering her sport seems not decreased compared to player’s time, but only changed in forms. As a coach, she expressed many concerns about her work, such as how

to coach her players or how to manage the tournament schedules. It sounded not just related to her work but also related to a degree of importance of her sport.

In a pre-retirement interview, Meredith was not really aware of the degree of importance of her sport but just said that she really loved it and was happy to play it. After her retirement occurred, Meredith said that her sport was one of the important things in her life and believed that she was a pure tennis person. She added that that will not change in the future even if she quits her coaching job or leaves her sport because she has been involved in her sport for a long time already, and she really loves tennis.

Meredith reported that her social network is based on her sport, and most of her friends are in her sport field. After her sport career ended, it appeared that her social networks were widened within her sport because of the new career, which required building new relationships with other coaches whom she had not known. Meredith also reported that her relationship with friends was far better than before in terms of spending more time with them. She did not mention narrowing of social networks or loss of relationships. Meredith also said that she met her boyfriend while she was working as a coach. She felt happy to have him, but she said that if she were still playing she could never have a boyfriend because tennis was too important and she would not want any distractions. After 5 months of retirement, she showed a different perspective from the second interview and reported some losses in her social network. Her relationships with close others had not changed. In contrast, Meredith said that she felt different from athlete time about other people who were not very close to her because some of her former friends treat her differently, have become neglectful, and some have lost contact with her. Most of her close friends were still in the tennis field, and as she was working in the same area with them she did not feel her relationship with them had changed. A year after her sport career ended, she maintained the same social network, which seemed fairly stable. In addition, while she was in the process of decision-making, she had several arguments with her coach and felt unhappy about her coach's reaction. Meredith explained that she had a special relationship with her coach and wanted to maintain this after her retirement. Throughout the interviews, her relationship with the coach was one of the most frequently reported issues and tended to matter most to her.

Meredith and her coach Miranda had had quite a unique relationship. Meredith met her coach when she was 13-year-old, and her coach was with her for the last 17 years of her sport career. Miranda was her coach, friend, and like a close family member while she was playing, and someone who has seen Meredith's growing closer than anyone else. Miranda was someone on her side all the time, so Meredith expected that her relationship with Miranda would be the same even if she retired from her sport. During Meredith's retirement decision-making process, she really wanted to have someone to talk to and believed it could be Miranda, but she did not get satisfactory support from her coach. Meredith took the job of coach reluctantly on Miranda's advice, and she did not feel it was totally her own choice.

As mentioned above Meredith and Miranda had a very good coach-athlete relationship while Meredith was competing, but they came into conflict when Meredith was in the retirement decision-making process. After the retirement, their relationship became even worse because they had different views about the coach-athlete relationship after retirement. As Meredith became a coach, and they were working in the same team, Meredith expected Miranda's support as usual, but could not get much support, and it made her feel disappointed and frustrated. After 5 months of retirement, Meredith admitted changes in the relationship and context between playing time and post-retirement life and tried to separate work from personal issues with Miranda. Meredith intended to quit her job, if it would make her relationship with Miranda better because she still believed her former coach was one of her best friends but working in the same team was destroying her relationship with Miranda.

In terms of the timing of retirement, Meredith accepted it was the right time for her to retire but showed discomfort with the process, especially her sudden injury, which caused her to make an abrupt retirement decision, and her coach's unsupportive reaction. Meredith said injury forced her to choose retirement from her sport, and made her feel unhappy and unprepared. She expressed more negative emotions (e.g., meaninglessness, fear of uncertain future, fear of freedom, stress, feeling of losses, and depression) than positive emotions (e.g., satisfaction with sport achievement, relief, and freedom) throughout the retirement process.

Meredith recalled that she had a hard time in injury rehabilitation. At the time, Meredith regretted what she had done as an athlete, such as “giving up” family and friends for her tennis career and all the sacrifices that she made. After all, she felt it seemed as though she got nothing in return but the major injury for being an elite athlete. She had a major concern about life after her sport career because of a lack of life skill development and social experiences. She believed that her experiences as an athlete were very different from those of non-athletic life and concluded that she has lived in a small world. She tended to blame her coach for her lack of experience and life skill development. For example, while she was playing, she was totally dependent on her coach and had to consult her on matters great and small. In contrast, when she was in the retirement decision-making process and after she retired from her sport, her coach was not as interested in her. After 11 months, Meredith expressed strong negative feelings about losing her coach’s attention, including disappointment, frustration, anger, depression, and was worried about her loss of privilege. According to her, she was one of the best players in the country, but the thought of retirement and becoming a coach made her feel uneasy because eventually, she would be the same as all “normal players”.

As Meredith faced her retirement very suddenly, she did not have any pre-retirement plan. After she decided to retire, she spent much time considering her post-sport pathways, but before she could prepare for it she took a coaching job in her team, which was offered by her coach. Meredith confided that taking the coaching job was half forced on her by Miranda (her coach) and starting a new career without preparation caused adjustment difficulties. Meredith also kept showing a lack of confidence about becoming a coach because of her weakened physical condition and lack of motivation. She tended to suffer a high degree of work stress throughout the whole process, and after 5 months of retirement she was hospitalized and a psychological problem causing her physical pain was diagnosed. After 11 months of her retirement, although Meredith was building confidence and competence for handling her new career, she was still considering quitting her coaching job because of her poor relationship with Miranda.

During the process, Meredith showed active coping, such as putting more effort into overcoming work difficulties and learning new things. She tended to build confidence and learn things through her experiences and mistakes. Meredith perceived quite a high degree of social support from significant others. She also tried to get support from Miranda and former teammates, but she could not get enough support from them and was disappointed in their reaction. Regarding her relationship with Miranda, Meredith used venting emotions and acceptance as coping strategies because she did not want to talk to others and thought no one would understand about her special relationship with Miranda. Throughout the process, Meredith also reported negative outcomes or responses to her stress, including excessive shopping and depending on alcohol.

In conclusion, throughout the retirement process Meredith showed gradual identity shift from “a player” to “a coach”. Meredith experienced a high degree of negative emotions, which related to her retirement decision-making process, fear of an uncertain future and her coach-athlete relationship. In addition, she did not have any pre-retirement planning in place and could not prepare for her post-sport career even after she made her retirement decision. Meredith used active coping for her post-sport career and adjustment to her new life, employed emotional-focused coping for the coach issue, and showed some negative behaviour in terms of career transition distress.

Appendix D: Analysis Table (Study 2)

<i>Super ordinate themes</i> Sub ordinate themes Emergent themes	Identifying recurrent themes																				Present in over half of sample?			
Participants	Meredith				Christina				Isobel					George					Alex					
Interviews	I1	I2	I3	I4	I1	I2	I3	I4	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	
<i>Sense of self, others, and process of identity shift</i>																								
Sense of self																					YES			
Athletic identity	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	YES
Tendency of identity foreclosure	V	V			V				V	V	V	V	V											YES
Social identity	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	YES
Comparison	V	V		V		V				V	V	V	V					V	V	V	V	V	V	YES
Identity confusion	V	V			V	V	V	V			V							V						YES
Sense of others																					YES			
Influence of others in sense of self	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V		V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	YES
Influence of others in identity shift		V	V	V	V	V	V	V				V	V					V			V	V		YES
Parents' influence									V	V	V	V												NO
Coaches' influence	V			V	V				V	V	V													YES
Tendency of identity shift																					YES			
Decrease in athletic identity		V			V	V	V	V					V			V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	YES
Psychological disengagement					V	V	V																	NO
New self		V	V	V			V	V					V										V	YES
Changes in focus/priority	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V				V	V			V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	YES
New interest		V	V	V		V			V		V		V			V	V	V	V		V	V		YES
New goals			V	V			V					V	V											YES
New social network		V						V					V			V		V						YES
<i>Coach-athlete relationship</i>																								
Interdependence	V	V	V	V																				NO
Interaction outcome	V	V	V	V																				NO

Restraint						V			V						V	V					V	V			YES
Positive reinterpretation							V				V	V					V	V		V			V	V	YES
Positive self-talk												V							V	V				V	YES
Mental preparation															V		V			V		V			NO
Mental disengagement							V												V						NO
Maladaptive behaviour patterns		V	V	V			V												V					V	YES
Decision-making process and consequences of the decision																									
Influential factors for career transition decision																								YES	
Reasons for retirement (self-choice)	V				V				V	V	V			V	V		V		V	V		V		YES	
Influence of athletic identity		V			V									V		V								YES	
Emotional influences				V		V		V		V				V	V					V				YES	
Post-sport career					V						V										V			YES	
Influence of readiness for retirement															V	V					V			NO	
Coaches	V	V		V	V	V			V	V	V	V	V	V	V				V	V	V	V		YES	
Significant others					V				V	V	V				V					V	V	V		YES	
Generativity			V	V			V									V					V			YES	
Psychological experiences during the decision-making process																								YES	
Gap between actual retirement and ideal retirement	V				V				V															YES	
Experienced difficulties	V		V	V	V	V			V		V	V	V	V	V								V	YES	
Pessimistic for the future	V	V												V					V					YES	
Ambiguous of voluntariness of the decision	V			V					V		V													NO	
Psychological consequences of the decision																								YES	
Satisfaction with sport career	V			V	V	V			V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V		YES	
Satisfaction with retirement								V			V						V	V						YES	
Satisfaction with postponement											V	V	V			V	V							NO	

Satisfaction with post-sport career				V				V		V	V	V			V	V	V	V		V			YES	
Positive influence of the interviews							V		V			V					V						YES	
Comfortable feelings								V			V	V		V									YES	
Freedom		V			V		V	V				V	V							V	V		YES	
Relief	V	V				V	V					V								V	V	V	YES	
Excitement					V	V			V	V													NO	
Peaceful feelings						V							V										NO	
Fear of uncertain future	V				V	V			V					V	V		V	V	V					YES
Fear of facing new world						V				V	V		V	V	V	V			V	V	V			YES
Fear of failure in new career			V	V			V									V		V						YES
Low degree of motivation			V					V										V						YES
Self-doubt	V			V	V				V					V		V		V	V		V			YES
Losses			V	V			V	V				V	V			V		V				V	V	YES
Work stresses		V	V	V			V					V	V			V		V				V	V	YES
Concerns and worries		V				V				V	V	V	V	V		V		V	V	V		V		YES
Difficulties with new life styles			V	V														V					V	YES
Building new social network as a problematic								V				V		V				V				V	YES	
Social isolation						V	V	V																NO
Locus control																							YES	
Lack of control during the athletic career			V		V	V			V	V		V											YES	
Lack of control during the retirement decision	V	V			V	V				V	V							V					YES	
Perceived control during the retirement decision														V	V	V	V						NO	
Lack of control over current situation																	V						NO	
Increases in control over life after the actual retirement			V	V			V	V					V									V	YES	

Appendix E: Consent Agreement Form (Study 3)

Study topic: Exploring the Retirement from Sport Decision-making Process based on the Transtheoretical Model

연구주제: 소그룹 인터뷰를 통한 대한민국 테니스 선수들의 은퇴결정과정 에 대한 탐구

Investigator: Sunghee Park

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Purpose of the research

The purpose of the study is to explore Korean tennis players' experiences and perceptions of the sport career termination decision-making process. Results from the study should broaden the understanding of Korean tennis players' sport career termination decision-making process and career transition experiences. Also, the study findings may provide career transition knowledge to assist the development of a programme to help enhance athletes' well-being and welfare for life after sport.

연구목적

본 연구의 목적은 한국테니스 선수들의 은퇴결정과정 에 대한 선수들과 코치들의 인식과 경험을 탐구하고, 분석하여, 은퇴결정과정과 은퇴 후 삶에 대한 적응의 관계를 밝히는데 있습니다. 또한 차후 스포츠 현장에서 은퇴하는 선수들의 은퇴 후 삶의 질 향상을 위해 필요한 프로그램을 개발하고, 제공하는 데에 기여하고자 합니다.

Processes of the research

Participants will participate in one focus group and discuss the sport career termination decision-making process. Participants will be asked a series of questions focusing on social background, experiences, and feelings of their retirement decision, and self-identity.

연구진행

연구자는 각 1 회씩 자신의 속한 그룹과 운동선수들의 은퇴에 대해 소그룹 토론을 하게 될 것입니다. 연구대상자는 개인의 사회적 배경, 은퇴를 결정하고, 실행하는 과정에서 느끼고 경험했던 심리적, 정서적 경험, 그리고 자아정체성에 대해 이야기하고, 토론하게 될 것입니다.

Recoding of interviews and confidentiality

The focus groups will be videotaped. The information will be used only for the purpose of the study, and responses will be completely confidential. Also, your name and personal identifying data will not be given with the information and if necessary, I will alter identifying details and use a pseudonym to protect confidentiality.

인터뷰 녹음과 비밀보장

모든 소그룹인터뷰 내용은 녹화 될 것이며, 녹화된 인터뷰 내용은 연구목적 이외에는 사용되지 않을 것입니다. 또한 연구대상자의 익명과 함께 인터뷰 내용의 비밀이 철저히 보장될 것입니다.

Risks

As a participant of the study you may experience some discomfort discussing your reactions to your transition experiences or interacting with other participants. If this occurs, the researcher will stop the focus group immediately, and if you want, you can withdraw from the study at any time. Also, you may decline to answer any question.

위험

연구대상자는 본 연구에 참여함으로써 자신의 은퇴경험을 설명하는 데 있어서나 토론하는 데 있어 유쾌하지 못한 부분에 대해 이야기를 하게 됨으로 인해 불편한 감정을 경험하게 될 수 있습니다. 이러한 일이 생길 경우, 연구자는 즉시 인터뷰를 중단할 것이며, 연구대상자는 원한다면 아무런 조건없이 언제든지 연구참여를 그만 둘 수 있으며, 질문에 대한 응답을 거부할 수 있습니다.

Benefits

As a participant, you may benefit from reflecting on your experiences and gain better understanding of the role and impact of career end decision-making process. In addition, based on your information, a better understanding will be gained about athletes' career transition processes, and you will contribute to helping other athletes' transition from sport in the future.

이익

연구대상자는 본 연구에 참가함으로써 자신의 경험을 통해 스스로를 비추어보는 이로운 경험을 할 수 있을 것이며 은퇴결정과정에서 더 깊이 이해할 수 있는 시간을 가질 수 있을 것입니다. 또한 당신의 연구참여가 미래 은퇴할 선수들의 은퇴과정과 은퇴 후의 삶의 질이 더 나아지도록 하는데 기여하게 될 것입니다.

Right to withdraw from the study

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study any time. Also, you can request the results of the study at any stage, and ask any question about the study to the researcher.

연구중단의 권리

연구대상자는 본 연구에 자발적으로 참여하는 것입니다. 그러므로, 연구의 어느단계에서든지 연구참여를 중단할 수 있는 권리를 가지고 있으며, 또한 연구결과를 요구할 수도 있습니다. 그리고 당신은 연구대상자로서 연구와 관련된 모든 상황에 대해 언제든지 연구자와 연락을 주고받을 수 있으며, 모든 종류의 질문을 할 수 있습니다.

I have read the above information and I understand the procedures. I agree to participate in this study voluntarily.

나는 위의 내용을 읽고 연구내용과 과정을 이해하였다. 본인은 본 연구에 자발적으로 참여하는 것에 동의한다.

Date(날짜)

Name(성명)

Signature of participant(서명)

Date(날짜)

Name(성명)

Signature of witness(참고인 서명)

*Data were collected while I was studying at Aberystwyth University, therefore, provided contact details were based on Aberystwyth University's office phone number and e-mail address.

Demographics

인구통계학적 변인

Age 나이

생년월일 년 월 일

Gender 성별 Male 남 Female 여

Nationality 국적

Marital status 결혼유무

Status Current player Retired player Coach

현재활동 선수 은퇴선수 코치

Competitive/coaching period Years

선수/코치로서의 기간 년

Current team status Professional Semi-professional Collegiate

현소속팀 프로팀 실업팀 대학팀

Competitive period for professional or semi-professional Years

프로팀 혹은 실업팀에서의 선수활동 기간 년

World ranking Top 100

세계랭킹 Top 100(위 이내) 101-300 301-500 501-700 701-1000 Over 1000(위
이하)

Voluntariness for retirement Voluntariness Involuntariness

은퇴사유 자발적 비자발적

Appendix F: Focus Group Topics (Study 3)

Opening: Introductions.

Introductory questions:

For retired athletes and coaches:

1. Can you tell me about your retirement experience please?

For active athletes:

1. How do you feel when you think of retirement?
2. What makes you think this is right timing for leaving your sport career?
3. What steps are involved in making athletes' retirement from sport decision?

Key questions:

1. What are your perceived influences on the decision-making process?
 - What do you understand the role of coach-athlete relationship in decision-making process?
 - What do you understand the role of self-identity in decision-making process?
 - What do you understand relationship between decision-making process and coping strategies?
 - Is there any other influences?
2. What coping strategies did you employ during the decision-making process?

Closing questions:

Is there anything needs to be discussed more?

Appendix G: Analysis (Study 3)

Meaning unit	Patterns	First order theme	Higher order theme
Assumption that retirement decision belong to athletes	General definition		Definition of retirement decision-making
Assumption that quick decision-making is better			
Balance between losses and gains			
Take inaction over action			
Inevitable process			
Entering to the other world			
Self and social –re-evaluation			
Less concern about the sport	Emotional responses		
Emotional conflict			
Difficult process			
Regret of devotions to the sport			
Definitional ambiguity	Definitional ambiguity		
Assumption that age and fear of uncertain future positively related to each other	Aging	Timing of retirement	Readiness for retirement
Assumption age and post-sport life choice negatively related to each other			
Better to find post-sport career soon as possible	Timing		
Better to make quick decision			
Take post-sport career opportunity			
Time to leave			
Earn time for preparation	Postponement		
Time for psychological preparation			
Teams' and coaches' favour			
Contract			
Comeback from the retirement			
Financial needs			
Avoid life changes			
Fears and worries about post-sport career	Worries and concerns of post-sport career	Fear of uncertain future	Factors related to athletes' sport career end decision-making
Self-doubt for post-sport career			
Fear for the new world			
Lack of post-sport choice	Lack of perceived post-sport choices		
Lack of job opportunity			
Lack of ability to get post-sport career			
Stay in the same field	Sport related career		
Choosing secure post-sport career over sport career	Choosing secure post-sport career		
Graduated secure career influence on early sport career end			
Injury	Reasons for career end	Control issue	
Physical limitation			
Aging			
Competition pressure			
Pressure from parents			
Disengagement			
Loss of sporting goals			
Loss of interests			
Unsatisfied within career transition			
Other (new) interests			
Getting married	Significant life event		
Time and effort on the sport	Identity foreclosure	Athletic identity	
Missing the sport after the sport career end			
Importance of the sport			
Lack of social experiences			
Lack of other interest			
Care of others during the career end decision process	Close others	Interpersonal relationships	
Assumption that bad coach-athletes relationship can cause sport career end	Coach-athletes relationships		
Tried to keep good relationship with coaches			
Coaches roles in athletes career end decision-making			

Anxiety	Psychological response		Psychological and emotional responses and consequences			
Anger						
Self-doubt						
Regret for narrow focus						
Depression						
Feeling of isolated						
Experienced difficulties in decision-making process						
Experienced difficulties in during the preparation						
Experienced difficulties to adjust to the new career						
Experienced psychological retirement						
Relieve						
Excitement						
Comport						
Satisfied with retirement decision						
No regret						
Satisfied with current life				Gender differences		
Military duty caused postponed of starting new career						
Military duty limit sport career						
Social role (breadwinner)						
Different coping style						
Differences in physical abilities	Preparation	Pre-retirement plan	Coping strategies			
Needs of preparation						
Life skill development as a preparation						
Lack of preparation						
Against preparing post-sport life while playing						
Assumption that the last stage of sport career is time to prepare post-sport life						
Needs of time for preparation						
No consideration of post-sport life early stage of sport career						
Assumption that having pre-retirement plan positively influences on sport career						
Needs of visions for post-sport life				Goal setting	Social support	
Coach as a mentor						
Coaches' support						
Parents' support				Account-making		
Friends' support						
Talk to significant others				Restraint	Coping skills	
Assumption that story acceptance by significant others helps to cope						
Earn time for pre-planning				Religions		
Postponed sport career end for financial needs						
Pray				Focused on venting emotions		
Venting emotions						
Put more effort				Active coping	Life skills	
Skipping classes due to athletic role						
Lack of opportunities to have proper education				Insufficient education		
Lack of education caused difficulties in post-sport career choice						
Lack of autonomy				Lack of life skills		
Dependence						
To be patient				Transferable skills		
Ability to work hard						
Physical and mental strength						
Motivation						
Team spirit						
Social network						
Assumption that school sporting system causes lack of life skills development	System	Organisation				
No organisational support						

Appendix H: Consent Agreement Form (Study 4)

Study topic: Exploring the Process of Developing an Athletes' Career Transition Programme

Investigator: Sunghee Park

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*E-mail: ssp08@aber.ac.uk

Purpose of the research

The purpose of the study is to explore the process of developing an athletes' career transition programme, including (a) the views of the people involved in a national organisation during the development of a support programme for athletes' career transition, and (b) how these people from the organisation address the important psychological factors associated with athletes' career transition in developing support programmes for athletes.

Processes of the research

You are invited to the study voluntarily, and will be asked to sign the consent agreement paper before you participate. Subsequently, you will be asked to take part in the study in several different ways (e.g., an individual interview; have your committee meetings video recorded; a conference call). If you agree to be interviewed, you will have 1 or 2 individual interviews with the researcher. The duration of interviews or conference calls will be between 30 and 60 minutes, and all the interviews will be tape recorded with your permission.

Recoding of interviews and confidentiality

The interviews, meetings and conference calls will be recorded. The information will be used only for the purpose of the study, and responses will be completely confidential. Also, your name and personal identifying data will not be given with the information and if necessary, I will alter identifying details and use a pseudonym to protect confidentiality.

Risks

The one risk is the possible identification of your name and data via your recorded tapes. I will not give your name or data to any other individual. Also the tapes, the interview transcripts and all other relevance information will be kept in a lockable filing cabinet, and the electronic data will be kept on my computer, in a locked room in the Carwyn James building. The tapes and the data will not be kept and will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Benefits

As a participant, you may benefit from reflection on your views of psychological aspect in athletes' career transition in support your athletes and gain better understanding of the process. In addition, based on your

information, a better understanding will be gained about developing athletes' career transition programmes, and you will contribute to helping athletes' transition from sport in the future.

Right to withdraw from the study

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study any time. Also, you can request the results of the study at any stage, and ask any question about the study to the researcher.

I have read the above information and I understand the procedures. I agree to participate in this study voluntarily.

Date Name Signature of participant

Date Name Signature of witness

*Data were collected while I was studying at Aberystwyth University, therefore, provided contact details were based on Aberystwyth University's office phone number and e-mail address.

Appendix I: Interview Guide (Study 4)

Opening questions:

Name: _____, age: _____, gender: _____, role _____

Key questions:

1. Can you tell me about yourself please?
2. In what way, supporting athletes' career transition is important?
3. How do you think support from national sport organisations for assisting athletes' career transitions?
4. Please tell me what is your role for the developing programme?
5. What do you expect from the new programme?
6. How did you feel when you first heard the existence of the supporting programme?
7. If we look specifically at the psychological factors associated with athletes' career transition, what are the psychological benefits that you can get from the programme? (e.g., individual development, athletic identity, self-confidence, readiness for career transition, and coping strategies)
8. What are the career transition needs of athletes in Ireland?
9. How do you think of the benefits of the programme in performance enhancement?
10. How do you think coaches' role in athletes' career transition? (e.g., mentor?)
11. Can you tell me what are the risks or limitations for involving the programme?

Closing questions:

Is there anything needs to be discussed more?

Summary of the interview