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FEMALE GOLFERS' TRANSITIONS FROM HIGHLY COMPETITIVE SPORT:
A NATURALISTIC INQUIRY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By:

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PREFACE

Upon a recent review of my “Sport Profile Analysis” (an assignment for a sport psychology course), I realized that the evolution process of my own transition from sport had gone full circle. Sport has been an important part of my life, and suffering career-altering injuries has always peaked my interest in quality-of-exit from sport. Having had my athletic career shortened by injuries and not yet ready to retire, I searched for ways to continue to participate: doctors, surgeries, and rehabilitation. My physical capabilities were diminishing while my desire and drive to compete was growing. As I continued to search for answers, my educational path turned to Rehabilitation Counseling, where I worked assisting injured workers return to employment. I continued to participate in sport on a recreational level against doctors’ orders.

Throughout my graduate course work, I was provided with many continuing opportunities for self-exploration and personal growth. Gradually, I began to acknowledge the importance that athletics had held in my life. My priorities were changing and shifting. Striving for first place was no longer the only way to compete. I was more than just a basketball and softball player. When I was an undergraduate my father was killed in
a car accident; and recently, my mother has suffered life-altering injuries. Throughout these last several years, competition has not been as important to me. Relationships and being present in the moment have become most important.

As I look back, I realize that sport competition was one thing in my life in which I completely and wholeheartedly submersed myself. Never once on the "spiritual plane" (sometimes referred to as "the zone") of sport did I find myself in an existential crisis wondering who I was or what I was doing and why. Once competition began I was fully involved, fully present in the moment.

The process of conducting and writing this document has led me to question time and time again, who I am; what I am doing; and why. The creation of this document enabled me to explore my own experiences of athletic transition and reflect upon the shifting of priorities and my continued involvement in athletics: There is life after sport; "the zone" exists outside of sport, too. We need only open to our minds and our souls... our essence.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sport, from an athlete's point of view,

"is a relationship — a living, loving relationship. It is a kind of love/hate relationship with challenge, struggle, sacrifice, victory, defeat, self-improvement, coaches, teammates, audiences, and so on. For those athletes who have been committed to high performance for many years, the relationship grows into something very intimate and intense" (Werthner & Orlick, 1982, p. 188).

Werthner & Orlick's analogy states that high level sport requires years of daily commitment comprised of both passion and pain. In other words, the athlete's relationship with sport has its ups and downs, with both the taste of victory and the agony of defeat. "Sport is not a relationship of neutrality" (Werthner & Orlick, 1982, p. 188). Commitment to sport, some would argue, involves not only the body (physicality), but the mind, emotions, and the soul (cf. Highlen, 1991; Murphy & White, 1978; Werthner & Orlick, 1982). Consequently, when it comes time for the athlete to "retire from sport" and alter this intense relationship, a myriad of feelings and thoughts are likely to occur.

Possible thoughts and feelings surrounding transition from sport revolved around several dichotomies: continuity-continuation versus termination;
process versus event; gradual shift-reprioritization versus abandonment; and mild versus severe adjustment (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985). However, the majority of research that examined athletic retirement and transition from sport espoused that “retirement” was a negative and dreaded experience (cf. Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Hill & Lowe, 1974; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). Ogilvie & Howe (1986), for instance, stated that "termination of an athletic career often creates a major life crisis for which the athlete is not prepared" (p. 365). Other scholars espoused that athletic retirement is just like confronting a death or any other loss; that is, the grief and mourning of the loss of an athletic role is similar to the loss associated with the death of a loved one. Tunick, Etzel, & Leard (1991) identified five stages of loss due to athletic injury: (a) shock, (b) realization, (c) mourning, (d) acknowledgment, and (e) coping/reformulation. The process of leaving highly competitive sport also can involve a change in financial status (Ogilvie & Howe, 1986) and a loss of social recognition and status. In addition to injury, other precipitating factors of athletic retirement include the end of eligibility, voluntary retirement, or not being selected to continue to participate, (e.g., decreasing skill and agility, no longer a clear role on the team, Ogilvie & Howe, 1986).

Regardless of the precipitating event that triggers athletic retirement, the athlete faces a transition period necessitating adjustment. One of the primary reasons for a difficult adjustment to sport retirement is the saliency of the
individual's role as an athlete; the person's primary focus is on his/her athletic role. Ogilvie & Howe (1986) referred to this focus as the "sports only" identification; Adler and Adler (1991) called this intense involvement "role engulfment." Because of role engulfment, the athlete neglects many other aspects of his/her life (Adler & Adler, 1991; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). Accordingly, significant others can facilitate the realization that other roles will bring personal meaning to the athlete. These significant others (e.g., sport psychologist, family members, coaches, teammates) can assist retired athletes with the loss of their athletic role. For instance, the sport psychologist, cognizant of these difficulties, could provide valuable guidance to enable these individuals to shift or reprioritize their interests and move to another, financially and socially, rewarding phase of their lives.

Statement of the Problem

"Transitions in sport have received relatively little attention in the literature" (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990, p. 7). Most studies have centered on the transitions that involve retirement as event. Furthermore, these studies neglected to examine female athletic retirement. "To date...virtually no consideration has been given to female sport retirement. Not only are empirical data lacking, but females have been systematically ignored in theoretical conceptualizations" (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985, p. 103). Consequently, the focus of this research involved the perceptions and experiences of a
homogeneous group of female athletes who had disengaged from competitive sport, including intercollegiate sport and/or professional sport. The purpose of the study was to explore, understand, and generate a description of the process of female athletes' transitions from highly competitive sport.

**Foci of Inquiry**

In this research, female athletes explored, recreated, and reflected upon episodes related to their sport experiences and identified discrete and meaningful experiences which facilitated their transitions from sport. One specific purpose of the study was to explore smooth versus difficult transitions. More specifically, the following foci of inquiry were investigated:

1. The importance of sport;
2. Educational-occupational experiences;
3. Perception of gender;
4. Social supports;
5. Perception of transition; and
6. Post career sport participation.

**Delimitations and General Assumptions**

Choice of paradigm has distinct implications for the actual procedures of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described 14 characteristics of operational naturalistic inquiry. "These fourteen characteristics display a
synergism such that, once one is elected, the others more or less follow’” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39).

**Characteristic 1: Natural setting.** Naturalistic inquiry is carried out in the natural context of the phenomenon under study because the context is critical to understanding the meaning of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The natural context for this study included the place of employment for two of the participants and the homes of the other three.

**Characteristic 2: Human instrument.** Data gathering is accomplished via human instruments versus paper and pencil instruments. Humans are able to adapt and respond to the situation at hand and thus “adjust to the variety of realities that will be encountered” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39). The women were the heroines of their own stories. Data were gathered from them via a semi-structured interview.

**Characteristic 3: Utilization of tacit knowledge.** Intuitive, felt knowledge is legitimate, just as is knowledge expressible in language form (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Tacit knowledge is an important aspect of naturalist inquiry as “much of the interaction between investigator and respondent occurs at this level” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 40).

**Characteristic 4: Qualitative methods.** Qualitative methods “are more adaptable to dealing with multiple (and less aggregatable) realities” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.40) than are quantitative methods. Humans as sources of data
are bound to present multiple realities. The semi-structured interview as means to gather data is equipped to handle multiple realities.

**Characteristic 5: Purposive sampling.** Purposive sampling was employed to maximize the variation of data; thus exposing more deviant cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were thoughtfully selected for their ability to provide diverse voices to the female athletic retirement experience.

**Characteristic 6: Inductive data analysis.** The process of inductive data analysis allows for identification of multiple realities and interactions between investigator and participant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Naturalistic inquiry acknowledges and supports the belief that there are many ways to view the same experience. Interviewing retired female athletes provided each one with the opportunity to share her thoughts, perceptions and subsequent inconsistencies surrounding those beliefs.

**Characteristic 7: Grounded theory.** "... no a priori theory could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 41). A priori theory does not allow for the neutrality that theory emerging from (grounded in) the data does. Data analysis in this study was undertaken without prior conceptions of the process of female athletic retirement.

**Characteristic 8: Emergent design.** Naturalistic inquiry allows the research design to flow and evolve based upon the gathering of the data rather
than a priori theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Multiple realities unfold; they are not preconceived. The semi-structured interview evolved from the first pilot study to the final interview. The evolution allowed the investigator to respond to the participants as individuals, each with her own unique story to narrate.

**Characteristic 9: Negotiated outcomes.** The data belong to the participants. Meanings of the data are best negotiated with the participants since the phenomenon is an aspect of their reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks were employed to ensure that the context was understood and appropriately presented.

**Characteristic 10: Case study reporting mode.** The results are presented based upon the individual athletes’ view. Each voice was critical to understanding the perspective.

**Characteristic 11: Idiographic interpretation.** This study was not undertaken with the goal of generalizing to every female athlete who has retired or will retire. Rather, this study illuminated five, female golfers’ transitions from highly competitive sport. In other words, this study was an initial step in developing a theory of female athletic retirement.

**Characteristic 12: Tentative application.** Broad application of these findings to other retired female athletes was not the intent of this study. Furthermore, the findings may not be duplicated elsewhere as the particular
interaction between the investigator and the respondent may not be duplicated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Application of the findings are, at best, tentative.

**Characteristic 13: Focus-determined boundaries.** Inquirer preconceptions did not guide this research. Rather, boundaries were determined by the emergent focus (i.e., multiple realities define the focus). For example, the semi-structured interview guide was reviewed after each interview, so as to ensure that the information received appropriately addressed female athletes’ transitions from sport.

**Characteristic 14: Special criteria for trustworthiness.** Validity and reliability are “inconsistent with the axioms and procedures of naturalistic inquiry” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 42). Consequently, criteria for trustworthiness specific to naturalistic inquiry are necessary. In other words, in conducting this naturalistic inquiry, extraneous variables were not controlled. The purpose of this research was not to control for history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, etc. (see Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

**Significance of the Study**

The desire to conduct this study emerged out of my background in rehabilitation counseling and my interest in athletics, particularly adjustment to athletic injury. The goal was to understand the everyday practices surrounding transition from competitive sport for female athletes. However, reasons for disengagement were not limited to athletic injury.
The greatest relevance and meaning of the study is for athletes and their parents, athletic departments, and sport psychologists, as well as other persons who have the best interest of student-athletes in mind. This study will facilitate identification of athletes who are likely to experience a smooth transition, as well as those who are not. All athletes' experiences, whether they had smooth or difficult transitions, are important to the establishment of prevention-oriented transition programs. Such programs would assist athletes in development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward making a smooth transition from highly competitive sport.

**Definitions of Commonly Used Terms**

**Action/Interaction Strategies**: plans developed to cope with, manage, and respond to a phenomenon under a specific set of perceived conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Adaptation**: a process during which an individual moves from being totally preoccupied with the transition to integrating the transition into his or her life (Schlossberg, 1981).

**Axial Coding**: the activities involved with regrouping data in a new manner after open coding (i.e., making connections between categories). A coding paradigm including conditions, context, action/interactional strategies, and consequences is employed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
Category: a classification of concepts which is generated when concepts are compared with one another and pertain to a similar phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Causal Conditions: events, incidents, or happenings that precede the occurrence or development of a phenomenon, sometimes referred to as "antecedents" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Competitive Sport: Any organized sport activity in which training and participation are time consuming and in which the level of performance meets relatively high standards of expectations. Specifically, retirement from highly competitive intercollegiate and/or professional sport were examined (Coakley, 1983).

Concepts: Conceptual labels placed on discrete happenings, events, and other instances of phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Consequences: Outcomes of actions and interactions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Context: The specific set of properties that pertain to a phenomenon (i.e., the locations of events or incidents pertaining to a phenomenon along a dimensional range). Context represents the particular set of conditions within which the action/interactional strategies are taken (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Dimensions: Location of properties along a continuum (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
**Dimensionalizing:** Breaking a property into its dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Intervening Conditions:** The structural conditions linking with the action/interactional strategies that pertain to a phenomenon. These conditions facilitate or retard the approach taken within a specific context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Opening Coding:** The activity of examining, comparing, and categorizing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Phenomenon:** The main idea, event, or happening about which a set of actions or interactions are directed at managing, handling, or to which a set of actions is associated (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Properties:** Attributes or characteristics pertaining to a category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Retirement:** the process of transition from participation in competitive sport to another activity or set of activities. This definition is somewhat different from popular connotations where retirement is often used to refer to an event that marks a withdrawal from, or an end to, an involvement (Coakley, 1983).

**Transition:** An event or nonevent that results in a change in assumptions about self and the world that requires a corresponding change in behaviors and relationships (Schlossberg, 1981).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

What happens to athletes when, for one reason or another, their competitive involvement ends (Coakley, 1983)? Most of the limited literature on athletic retirement, while studying males, has focused on “retirement” as a source of stress, a time of identity crisis, and/or a period of adjustment difficulties. In other words, retirement is highlighted as a negative event (cf. Hill & Lowe, 1974; McPherson, 1980; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986; Rosenberg, 1981).

Retirement as a Negative Event

Termination of an athletic career creates major life crises for which many athletes are not prepared (Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). Termination for these athletes (elite or professional) generally was the result of selection process, chronological age, or injury. Separation from sport has been referred to as “sport termination trauma;” although, Ogilvie and Howe acknowledged that some athletes handled the transition more successfully than others, “for most, it [was] a time of existential dilemmas and identity crises” (p. 367).

In support of their argument, Ogilvie and Howe (1986) cited a few research studies and presented several anecdotal stories of professional and elite athletes. However, Ogilvie and Howe (1986) did not limit their discussion to
professional and elite athletic retirement. They concluded "the issue of
termination is universal for athletes of all age groups and levels of competition" because the selection process or injury could happen at any point in the athletic experience (p. 373). Consequently, coaches' and sport psychologists' responsibility to assist athletes with "termination trauma" must begin with youth sport (Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). Moreover, the authors proposed that the "reaction pattern" to termination would follow a predictable course of stages: shock and numbness, denial, anger and resentment, depression, and unresolved feelings.

In his study of professional baseball players, Rosenberg (1981) concluded that "with the exception of former stars whose very names have value, the retired athlete — especially the retired minority athlete — finds himself in a business world for which he is often ill-prepared and which could hardly care less about his former meal-ticket and door opener, the status of professional athlete" (p. 7).

"Problem setting" is another term employed to describe the time period surrounding the retirement from sport (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). These authors surveyed 163 athletes from 20 Olympic sports (133 males and 30 females) concerning their retirement from high level competition. The athletes were from socialist countries, including the Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria; consequently, they did not need to worry about finding a job to support themselves (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). Eighty-three
percent (N=135) of the athletes responded that they had negative sensations during retirement, including difficulties before and after the event (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). "Negative sensations" referred to stress of some sort (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982, p. 167). The athletes responded that no amount of preparation for life after sport could protect them from the anxiety that time was against them. The authors noted that one of the most significant contributors to difficulty in retirement was the deselection process or the Darwinian philosophy of "survival of the fittest."

Problem setting occurred as a result of the athlete's commitment to and excellence in sport and the subsequent neglect of developing self outside of sport. Almost 50% of the athletes indicated no acknowledgment of any profession they might consider after leaving their sport career. The athlete's social and psychological development was retarded in comparison to their nonathletic peers (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). The researchers suggested that athletes might want to consider spending more time with family and friends or immerse themselves in new social surroundings.

The representativeness of the Svoboda and Vanek's (1982) sample is questionable as the study included only those athletes who volunteered to participate, which may have excluded "the most dramatic cases" (p. 174). In addition, only 30 females were included. Accordingly, the authors recommended
that separate studies should to be dedicated to the experiences of female athletes.

Hill and Lowe (1974) presented a metathesis on the retiring athlete which emphasized the difficulties associated with the transition process. The authors concluded that retirement from professional sport was a negative event in which, inevitably, the person would experience an identity crisis, a loss of status, a reduction in income, along with the need for new skills, and new roles.

In a 1984 study of ten former professional football players forced to exit competition, Gordon examined athletic retirement as a role loss. Gordon (1984) proposed that adjustment to athletic retirement was an “active and dynamic psychological process in response to ‘identity denial.’ That is, in spite of role loss, the former athlete’s meanings of self remain and therefore continuity of self concepts become subject to identity denials, affective displacement and self adjustive processes” (p. 192). Forced retirement from professional football challenged the former athlete’s perception of self. Gordon recommended examining athletes who experienced voluntary role loss to clarify whether or not involuntary termination of the athlete role was a “unique role loss which [lent] itself to identity denials and self adjustive processes” (p. 198).

McPherson (1980), in his review of the retirement from professional sport literature, suggested that inevitably some athletes (i.e., males) never adjust to the termination of their athletic career. Much information surrounding the social
situations of former athletes is "anecdotal and based on journalistic accounts, often about those who have not adjusted. . ." (McPherson, 1980, p. 126). Furthermore, there are few descriptions of any kind about retired, professional female athletes, that includes, theoretical studies, empirical studies of amateur athletes, or anecdotal accounts. McPherson (1980) suggested that future examinations of adjustment to retirement from sport draw upon gerontological theories such as disengagement theory, activity theory and continuity theory.

Gerontological Approaches to Retirement

Rosenberg (1981) examined gerontological theories for their applicability to disengagement from sport, specifically, disengagement theory (Cumming & Henry, 1961), activity theory (Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953), continuity theory (Atchley, 1977), and social breakdown theory (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973). Disengagement theory (Cumming & Henry, 1961) perceives retirement as a mutual separation of society and the individual for the mutual benefit of both. Baillie and Danish (1992) concluded that disengagement theory provided little insight into understanding athletic retirement because "mutual withdrawal is rarely the case in athletics" (p.89). Activity theory (Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953) posits that if a comparable level of activity is maintained as the individual moves from one role to another, the adjustment to retirement will be smoother. Baillie and Danish (1992) argued that it is "nearly impossible" to duplicate the activity level of the athlete outside of sports (p. 89). Continuity theory (Atchley, 1977)
suggests that activity levels be maintained; however, redistribution of energies to new roles and activities are necessary. Rosenberg (1981) noted that when the degree of commitment to sport is high (e.g., role engulfment), an uncomplicated redistribution of activity is improbable. Social breakdown theory (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973) states that "negative labeling takes place with the loss of a specific role" (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985, p. 102). Negative labeling can result in a cyclical process of social withdrawal, continued negative self-talk, and lead toward greater separation. When retired athletes' images are tied solely to athletics and they are unable to reframe skills and talents, their self-concept may weaken through the cycle of negative labeling and social withdrawal (Baillie & Danish, 1992).

Athletic Retirement as Social Death

Lerch (1984) and Rosenberg (1984) proposed a model for examining retirement from sport from a thanatological perspective: athletic retirement as social death. The authors acknowledged that there were great differences between actual death and retirement from sport; however, such an analogy was useful for counseling athletes about the retirement experience.

In his theoretical proposal, Rosenberg (1984) noted that "regardless of economic status, retirement was a status transition of considerable social and psychological stress for the athlete" (p. 246). Rosenberg (1984) likened athletic retirement to "social death" and indicated that this model, which originated in
medicine, likewise, could be employed to understand the difficulties associated with leaving a career in athletics. Social death referred to (a) the condition of being treated as if one were dead even though biologically alive, and (b) the isolation and ostracism of one individual from another individual or group (Rosenberg, 1984).

Lerch (1984) developed the analogy between social death and athletic retirement via two thanatological constructs: awareness contexts (Glaser & Strauss, 1965) and stages of death (Kubler-Ross, 1969). “Awareness context,” in the athletic sense, represented the complete picture of what each person involved in sport disengagement knew about the athlete’s retirement status. Glaser and Strauss (1965) described four types of awareness: closed awareness, suspicion awareness, mutual pretense awareness, and open awareness.

Lerch (1984) applied Glaser and Strauss’ (1965) model of awareness contexts to athletic retirement. “Closed awareness” meant that the athletes would be unaware of others’ perceptions that they should retire. The athletes were closed to what others thought and were surprised when such information reached them. With “suspicion awareness,” the athletes suspected it may be time to retire but those around them denied those inklings. “Mutual pretense” happened when all the parties involved knew retirement was imminent yet pretended otherwise. Finally, “open awareness” took place when those persons
confronting athletic disengagement openly recognized that retirement was inevitable.

Similarly, Lerch (1984) compared athletic retirement to Kubler-Ross' (1969) stages of death: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Athletes progress through these various stages as they attempt to cope with their retirement (Lerch, 1984; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). Athletes might deny that their skills are waning and ignore the need to find alternative options. Furthermore, athletes could become angry with their bodies and question "why this was happening" to them, arguing that they do not deserve this decline in their skills. Next the athletes might bargain with the coach, stating that they will work even harder and practice even longer to keep their position on the team. Depression is yet another coping mechanism that retiring athletes might experience, as a profound sense of loss can result from losing such an integral role. Athletes might feel embarrassed or like they have let down their families and friends by failing to maintain their athletic status. Ultimately, athletes reach the stage of acceptance. They leave the sport.

"When athletes are cut, demoted, or released from a team in professional sport, a part of them may die, but only a part" (Lerch, 1984, p. 269). Retired athletes may suffer a social death, not a real death. There is recovery, which may include "resurrection," or belief that the retirement is "temporary" (Lerch, 1984).
Empirical studies to test the model of athletic retirement as social death have not been undertaken. The theory is more likely to be applicable on a case-by-case-basis, rather than in a general sense. Possibly retirement as social death would be most appropriate for those athletes forced to exit sport. Not all athletes will suffer a "social death" upon leaving sport. Some may actually find athletic retirement as a positive change in their lives (Arviko, 1979; Coakley, 1983; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Kleiber, Greendorfer, Blinde, and Samdahl, 1987; Lerch, 1981; Reynolds, 1981; Synder & Baber, 1979).

**Retirement as a Positive Process**

Synder and Baber (1979) compared 233 former intercollegiate athletes (males) with 190 cohort nonathletes (males) and found no evidence that disengagement from college sport was stressful. The authors noted no difference between athletes and nonathletes in satisfaction level with friendships, marriage, financial situation, work activities, attitudes toward work, or general life style. Former athletes were successful in adjusting their interests and activities after college competition.

Kleiber, Greendorfer, Blinde, and Samdahl (1987) studied quality-of-exit from university sports of 426 male, former basketball and football players. The authors reported "mixed support for the quality-of-exit thesis" (p.28). In other words, good endings (e.g., recognized during last year, started majority of
games) did not necessarily affect subsequent life satisfaction; however, bad
endings (e.g., career cut short due to injury) might.

Greendorfer & Blinde (1985) argued that gerontological and
thanatological theories may not be useful in examinations of retirement from
sport. To support their argument Greendorfer & Blinde (1985) cited three
studies (Arviko, 1976; Lerch, 1981; Reynolds, 1981) that applied a
gerontological perspective but did not support a relationship between
adjustment/life satisfaction and sport related factors.

Arviko (1976), in a study of professional male athletes, noted that the
majority of major league baseball players indicated relatively high levels of
adjustment. Those athletes with a broad-based social support system that
included family, friends, educational and occupational components experienced
more ease in transition than those who were without such a network. Lerch
(1981), in his study of former major league baseball players, concluded that
adjustment to retirement, for some respondents, "took some time." Similarly,
respondents believed that the Major League Baseball Association could provide
assistance to ease the transition process. Nonetheless, variables associated
with sport were not related to the athletes' adjustment process (e.g., career
length, fame, voluntary/involuntary retirement).

In a study of professional football players, Reynolds (1981) demonstrated
that variables associated with sport (length of career, notoriety, choice versus
forced retirement) did not affect current job satisfaction or job status. However, the return rate for the eight-page questionnaire was 22%, leading to the questionable nature of the findings.

Greendorfer and Blinde (1985), in their survey of 1,124 former intercollegiate male (N = 427; 38% response rate) and female (N = 697; 42% response rate) athletes, found “there was little evidence to suggest these athletes experienced adjustment difficulties” (p. 107). However, 17% of both males and females indicated some or extreme dissatisfaction with self upon retirement. In addition, “38% of the males and 50% of the females indicated they very much or extremely missed sport involvement” (p. 108). Reasons for happiness or unhappiness were not explored. Due to low response rate, caution should be exercised when interpreting these findings.

According to Greendorfer and Blinde (1985), interest or investment in sport role commitment varied over time, indicating that sport involvement may be more of a process than previous conceptualized in the literature. The authors noted that future research should investigate the possibility that athletes, due to the pressures of intercollegiate sport and the intense time commitment, may actually welcome retirement and the accompanying new possibilities.

Sinclair and Orlick (1993) explored the transition experiences of 199 retired high-performance athletes (N=99 males, N=100 females). The findings demonstrated that those athletes who experienced a smooth adjustment retired
after they had achieved their sport-related goals or because they had achieved their goals. Those subjects who experienced a difficult transition, felt inadequate outside of sport and felt that keeping busy was not an effective coping strategy. One finding of note was that “very few” sex differences were found (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993, p. 147). The majority of athletes (74%) believed that retirement had altered their lives in a positive manner.

Allison and Meyer (1988) conducted a study of women professional tennis players and examined their perceptions of retirement from the sport. Twenty-eight potential participants were found through the use of snowball sampling. Twenty completed and returned the semi-structured questionnaire, which included Likert and open-ended questions. Sixty percent (N=12) never thought about becoming a “career” tennis player. Antecedents to retirement included frustration/burn-out (40%; N=8), dislike of travel (25%; N=5) and injury (15%; N=3). Initial responses to retirement included relief (50%; N=10) and loss of identity and feelings of isolation (30%; N=6). Results demonstrated that the women did not find retirement from professional tennis traumatic; rather, they noted that disengagement was an opportunity to pursue other life roles.

Coakley (1983), in his review of the existing retirement information, reached a similar conclusion, suggesting that athletic retirement could be a positive experience rather than a negative one. Although the research was limited, the author noted that studies involving high school and amateur athletes
did not support the belief that retirement was traumatic. Retirement from sport for interscholastic and amateur athletes was seen as another part of "other normal developments such as leaving high school, entering college, or the labor force, and settling down into new relationships associated with family and career" (Coakley, 1983, p. 3). Coakley (1983) stated, "(a)fter reviewing the implications of data on retirement from competitive sport [i.e., retirement from interscholastic, intercollegiate, and professional athletics], it seems reasonable to conclude that leaving sport is not *inevitably* stressful or identity-shaking, nor is it the source of serious adjustment problems" (p.8). He suggested that persons studying retired athletes separate the effects of leaving sport from the adjustments typically associated with late adolescence, young adulthood and middle age. Retirement from competitive sport could be thought of as another phase of life.

**A Life-Span Approach to Transition from Sport**

Accordingly, a life-span developmental approach can be employed to understand an athlete’s transition from sport. The life-span developmental view is important to consider because it allows examination of decision points from a process perspective rather than an event perspective. Antecedent and subsequent events are important in understanding change, not just the change event itself. The life-span is made up of a combination and sequence of roles,
and participation in collegiate athletics can be one of many roles played by people during the course of their lives (Super, et al., 1957).

People play a variety of roles as they mature. While some of these roles begin early in life (e.g., child, pupil, and student), others begin later in life (e.g., homeowner, and parent; Super, 1980). The role of athlete can exist across the life-span, with many changes along the way. For example, the athlete could participate at any or all of the following levels: recreational sport, interscholastic sport, intercollegiate sport, Olympic sport, professional sport. This competitive participation might begin in elementary school and continue in high school, only to drop out in college for a myriad of reasons (e.g., cut from the team, lack of desire or injury). Similarly, an athlete could participate at the elite level and gradually leave competitive sport.

**Sport-Only Identification**

Whatever the precipitating event of athletic retirement, the athlete faces a transition period necessitating adjustment to ex-athlete. One of the primary reasons of adjustment difficulty is due to the saliency of the peoples' roles as athletes (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1991; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986); their primary focus is on their athletic role. Because of role engulfment or the "sports only" identification, athletes neglected other aspects of their lives (Adler & Adler, 1991; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). The sport psychologist could work with retired athletes to assist them with the loss of this salient role. The grief and mourning
of the role loss was similar to the loss associated with an athletic injury. As previously mentioned, Tunick et al. (1991) summarized five stages of loss due to athletic injury: (a) shock, (b) realization, (c) mourning, (d) acknowledgment, and (e) coping/reformulation. In addition, with retirement, often times a change in status due to new economic realities and a loss of social recognition occurred (Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). The sport psychologist, cognizant of these difficulties, could help athletes make the transition to a financially and socially rewarding phase of life.

Both the sport psychologist's and the retired/retiring athlete's perceptions of retirement are important. For instance, do athletes and/or sport psychologists view retirement as a process or an event? This viewpoint will undoubtedly affect the adjustment to retirement. From the perspective of the Co-Essence Model of Sport (CEMS; Highlen, 1991), the view of retirement is that of a "process" which is dynamic, individualistic, and unpredictable. In contrast, the outcome or product view of retirement is static, stage-oriented, and predictable. Utilizing the CEMS, (the process model), athletes take an active role in the process as it unfolds; and the emotional adjustment is thought to be ongoing. However, with the product model, athletes are passive; things happen to them and they may feel abandoned once retirement has occurred. A healthy perception of retirement involves viewing the separation as a holistic endeavor (process) that includes reprioritizing interests rather than abandoning them (Greendorfer &
Retirement is one aspect of a person's life that encompasses aspects of lifelong development.

**Need for Primary Prevention**

Ideally, sport psychologists' work with athletes needs to commence prior to their retirement and focus on the development of other aspects of their lives. However, attempts to assist athletes are squelched because of distracting team members from their goal of win, win, win (e.g., the San Francisco 49ers' disappointing attempt to educate team members concerning post-retirement possibilities prior to their athletic retirement; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). Most efforts to provide education to athletes on the importance of their lives after sport commence after retirement! Primary prevention strategies (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990) are needed before the retirement process is imminent. One such program for professional athletes, Professional Athletes Career Enterprises, Inc. (PACE), was founded in 1982 by Steve Garvey, former professional baseball player and Mike Corey, a management consultant in career planning (Stark, 1985). The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) offers workshops and materials which provide structured pre-retirement planning (USOC, 1988; as cited in Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

Ogilvie and Howe (1986) suggested that sport psychologists, coaches, athletic administrators (college athletics), and management (professional athletics) assume preventive and educational roles with athletes prior to
retirement. This preventive, educational process needs to begin at the youth
sport level. Children need to be encouraged to develop many aspects of
themselves, not just their physical and athletic side (Ogilvie & Howe, 1986).
More importantly, children need to hear and believe that they are worthy just
because they exist, not because they win a game (cf. Highlen, 1994). Collegiate
male and female athletes need to be reminded not only of the limited number of
people securing professional athletic careers, but the limited number of years of
professional participation as well (Coakley, 1990; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986).
Furthermore, college student athletes must be strongly encouraged and advised
to complete their degree program because of the increased number of options
that an educational degree can provide (Coakley, 1990). Academic
achievement needs to be stressed as equally important, if not more important
than athletic achievement, so as to avoid the “sports only identification.”

Sport psychologists working with retired athletes need to encourage them
to utilize the skills they have developed from being athletes (Ogilvie & Howe,
1986). In addition, sport psychologists need to remember that these skills and
attributes can be transferred to other environments or be continued in the
athletic environment in a different capacity (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985).
Finally, sport psychologists need to examine their view of athletic retirement, and
be supportive of retirement as a unique and dynamic process for each athlete.
Accordingly, a cookbook approach to the issues surrounding transition from athletics will not suffice.

**A Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Retirement Among Athletes**

Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) drew on theoretical perspectives within and outside of sport, along with an examination of empirical studies within sport to develop a conceptualization of athletic retirement. Their five-step model (see Figure 1) examined adaptation to athletic retirement through the “entire” developmental course: (1) causes of athletic retirement; (2) factors related to adaptation to retirement; (3) available resources; (4) quality of adaptation to athletic retirement; and (5) retirement crisis.

**A Model for Analyzing Human Adaptation to Transition**

Schlossberg (1981) viewed adaptation to transition as a dynamic process, a movement through the various stages of a particular transition (see Figure 2). This movement can be described as moving from pervasiveness to boundedness. Adaptation can be assessed in terms of the individual’s resources-deficits balance or in terms of degree of similarity and difference between the pre- and post- transition environment (Schlossberg, 1981).

Three sets of factors influence adaptation to transition: (a) perceptions of the particular transition, including role change (gain or loss), affect (positive or negative), source (internal or external), timing (on-time or off-time), onset (sudden or gradual), duration (permanent,
Causes of Athletic Retirement:
- Age
- Deselection
- Injury
- Free Choice

Factors Related to Adaptation to Retirement:
- Developmental Experiences
- Self-Identity
- Perceptions of Control
- Social Identity
- Tertiary Contributors

Available Resources:
- Coping Skills
- Social Support
- Pre-retirement Planning

Quality of Adaptation to Athletic Retirement

Retirement Crisis:
- Psychopathology
- Substance Abuse
- Occupational Problems
- Family/Social Problems

Intervention:
- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Social

(Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994, p. 5)

Figure 1 Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Retirement Among Athletes.
PERCEPTION OF THE PARTICULAR TRANSITION
- Role Change: gain/loss
- Affect: positive/ negative
- Source: internal/ external
- Timing: on-time/ off-time
- Onset: gradual/ sudden
- Duration: permanent/ temporary/ uncertain

Degree of Stress

CHARACTERISTICS OF PRETRANSITION AND POSTTRANSITION ENVIRONMENTS
- Internal Support Systems:
  - Intimate relationships
  - Family unit
  - Network of friends
- Institutional Supports
- Physical Setting

ADAPTATION
- Movement through phases following transition: pervasiveness through boundedness
- Depends on:
  1. Balance of indiv's resources and deficits
  2. Diff's in pre- and post- transition environments re: perception, support, and individual

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUAL
- Psychosocial Competence
- Sex (and Sex-Role Identification)
- Age (and Life Stage)
- State of Health
- Race/Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic Status
- Value Orientation
- Previous Experience with a transition of a similar nature

(Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5)

Figure 2 A MODEL FOR ANALYZING ADAPTATION TO TRANSITION
temporary, or uncertain), and degree of stress; (b) characteristics of pre- and post-transition environments, including internal supports, institutional supports and physical setting; and (c) characteristics of the individual, including gender, age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and previous experience with a transition (Schlossberg, 1981).

**Male/Outcome Model of Sport**

The male model of athletics is commonly referred to as the **outcome model** of sport (see Carpenter & Acosta, 1991). This model involves the "win-lose" approach, which espouses that there is only one winner to every game. The male model also stresses competition rather than cooperation and values aggression. Participation in the outcome model of sport may lead to the corruption of big time college athletics (i.e., the revenue-producing sports; cf. Sperber, 1990). This corruption includes, but is not limited to, recruiting violations (e.g., University of Nevada, Las Vegas), playing injured athletes (e.g., the 1995 Men's NCAA Division I Basketball tournament), and the increased use of drugs by athletes (Anshel, 1991; Tricker, Cook, & McGuire, 1991).

Apparently, the outcome model of sport is not working effectively (Carpenter & Acosta, 1991; Highlen, 1991; Uhlir, 1982, 1987).

In a study of a men's collegiate basketball team, it was found that men entered college with high ideals concerning obtaining a degree, but for several reasons, their idealism turned to pragmatic detachment (Adler & Adler, 1985).
The "student" part of student-athlete was not reinforced for these young men. Neither the coaching staff nor the athletic department promoted academics. Students' schedules were made out for them, and they were not encouraged to take "difficult" classes. Similarly, the students' career interests were not developed or encouraged. Academic success was not reinforced and became of less interest to the team members (Adler & Adler, 1985). Ultimately, the student-athlete became engulfed in his role as an athlete and ignored his role as a student (Adler & Adler, 1985).

Female/Process Model of Sport

The architecture of sports for girls and women in the United States has changed remarkably in the last two decades (cf. Acosta & Carpenter, 1990). In 1971, the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) drew its first breath. A year later, Congress enacted Title IX, to become effective in 1978. Title IX, part of the Educational Amendments of 1972, was designed to prevent educational institutions receiving federal financial assistance from discriminating against individuals on the basis of sex. Title IX required educational institutions receiving federal funds to provide equal opportunities for males and females in any interscholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intramural athletics offered by the institution (Adrian, 1987). With Title IX’s passage and the enlargement of AIAW's membership and financial base, a massive growth in the
number of girls and women participating in sport took place (Acosta & Carpenter, 1990).

From 1970-1984, female participation in intercollegiate sports grew from approximately 16,000 to 150,000 (Knoppers, 1987). Compliance with Title IX forced colleges and universities to ensure equal opportunities for both men and women to participate in intercollegiate athletics (Jensen, 1983). In 1977, the average number of sports offered for women was 5.61 per school; in 1990, it was 7.24. In 1972, more than 90% of women's teams were coached by females. In 1990, only 43.7% of the coaches of women's teams were female. In 1972, more than 90% of women's programs were headed by a female administrator. Only 15.9% of women's programs were headed by females in 1990 (Acosta & Carpenter, 1990).

As is evident from the findings of Acosta & Carpenter (1990), there have been both positive (increased participation for women) and negative effects (decreased numbers of women in leadership roles) of the implementation of Title IX. Moreover, the irony of Title IX's attempt to alleviate gender discrimination and achieve equality for both men and women lies in the fact that although the growth in college sports programs for women led to a rapid expansion of leadership positions, for the most part, these positions were/are enjoyed by men (Uhlir, 1982). "If
women were to take these positions, they might threaten the existing control of college sports — a danger the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) foresaw as early as 1975, when it first made a formal attempt to become the guardian of women's athletics" (Uhlir, 1982, p. 174). Some literature has suggested that as women's athletics align with the NCAA, the pressure to win becomes more and more apparent in these programs, as well as with coaches and athletic departments (Carpenter & Acosta, 1991; Uhlir, 1982, 1987).

Meyer (1990) recently completed a parallel examination of the Adler and Adler work (1985) by studying a women's collegiate basketball team. Meyer (1990) entitled her study "From Idealism to Actualization" as opposed to the "Idealism to Pragmatic Detachment" of the Adler & Adler (1985) report. The women's basketball team, for a variety of reasons, did not abandon their roles as either students or athletes. Several hypotheses were suggested for this occurrence; most of which are based on the process model of athletics (cf. Carpenter & Acosta, 1991). The process model of athletics is commonly referred to as the women's model of athletics (e.g., Carpenter & Acosta, 1991; Highlen & Fassinger, 1984; as cited in Highlen, 1994). The women's model of athletics stressed the process of participation; that is, "it is not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game." Women's athletics championed cooperation and
grace, not competition and aggression; women's athletics championed the student portion of student-athlete and fostered the notion that winning is good, and can be compatible with the growth of the individual (Carpenter & Acosta, 1991).

With the process model operating in women's athletics, as well as limited opportunities for women in professional athletics, Meyer (1990) concluded that female athletes generally recognized the importance of academics in their lives. In particular, coaching staffs recognized the lack of professional opportunities for women and supported them as students as well as athletes (Meyer, 1990). This actualization and recognition is not to say that women's athletic programs are without problems. The women were not without their struggles and difficulties; however, for the most part, the women entered the college program hopeful of obtaining their degrees and progressed through the university gaining more confidence for accomplishing that goal (Meyer, 1990).

The contrasts between Meyer's (1990) study and Adler and Adler's (1985) work should be viewed with caution as Meyer's study is not a "true" replication of Adler and Adler's work. Adler and Adler's (1985) study involved an in-depth, four-year process of interviews and observations. Meyer's undertaking was an hour to an hour and a half interview with each participant. A four-year study of the women may have shown some similarities with the men. The evolution of the individual woman is missing from Meyer's work.
Determining Fit of Paradigm to Focus of Inquiry

What follows is a discussion of determination of fit of paradigm (positivist or naturalist) to focus of inquiry. Specifically examined are the questions surrounding the basic beliefs of inquiry along with illumination of why the naturalist paradigm fit the nature of this research. In determining fit of paradigm to the focus of the inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 229-231) suggested addressing five questions, which involve the basic beliefs of inquiry:

◆ Is the phenomenon represented by a multiplicity of complex constructions?
◆ What is the degree of investigator-phenomenon interaction and what degree of indeterminacy will the interaction introduce into the investigation?
◆ What is the degree of context dependence?
◆ Is it reasonable to ascribe conventional causal connections to the phenomenal events observed?
◆ To what extent are values likely to be crucial to the outcome?

Depending upon the answers to each of these questions, the perspective from which to frame the investigation is determined. Given certain assumptions, the investigation would be considered positivistic in nature. Assumptions in opposition to positivism might be considered naturalistic in nature. Neither version of these five assumptions is thought to be right or wrong; rather one is more appropriate than the other for the investigation's questions and concerns.
Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed “five assumptions [that] capture the most salient aspects” (p. 28) of positivism. These five assumptions are in stark contrast to the assumptions of naturalistic inquiry. Distinct differences exist between the positivist paradigm and the post positivist paradigm or as Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to it, the naturalist paradigm.

First, the nature of reality (ontology) differs between the two paradigms. Positivism is based upon the assumption that reality is singular and tangible and the whole is equal to the sum of the parts. The parts can be separated and studied independently of each other (i.e., the parts can be controlled). The nature of reality in positivistic research is such that it can be predicted and controlled (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). On the other hand, naturalistic paradigm rests on the assumption of multiple realities and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. These parts cannot be fragmented; rather they must be studied holistically. Naturalistic inquiry does not lead to prediction, control, and explanation, rather it leads to understanding (verstehen ) and to more questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The knowledge base or understanding base of female transitions from highly competitive sport was virtually nonexistent; consequently, the phenomenon demanded an in-depth exploration, a theory-generating exploration, not a theory-testing one. Accordingly, naturalistic inquiry was chosen for this investigation since the investigator was desirous of taking a more
in-depth examination of female athletes' transitions from competitive sport than
the positivist approach would afford. The focus of the inquiry did not lend itself
to reductionism and compartmentalizing. Rather, the focus called for an in-depth
analysis of a woman's perspective of her transition out of highly competitive
sport.

Second, the relationship between the knower and the known
(epistemology) are in opposition. With positivism, the relationship is dualistic in
nature. The researcher and the object of the research are distinct and separate.
Whereas the naturalistic paradigm is based upon an interactive relationship
between the inquirer and the “object” of the inquiry. The naturalistic inquirer
believes the investigation could not be accomplished without the expertise of the
participant (the “object” of the inquiry). The investigator and the participant are
inseparable. The knower and the known are connected.

This research process was designed to be interactive; that is, the
relationship between the knower and the known was intertwined. The women
who had experienced a transition from highly competitive sport were assumed to
be experts about their personal experiences. “Truth” in a qualitative study is
participant-oriented rather than researcher defined (Sandelowski, 1986). In
other words, “truth” is best achieved by initiating the encounter with participants
in their natural environments “naively,” or a priori (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;
Sandelowski, Davis, & Harris, 1989).
Third, the possibility of generalization is viewed conversely for the positivist and the naturalist. Via positivist research, theories are tested and "truth" is obtained. This type of research is reductionistic and compartmentalized; thinking is linear and hierarchical. Generalizations are possible because the "truth" is independent of context and time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, every time the same research is replicated, similar results will be obtained. On the contrary, naturalistic inquiry explores self-knowledge and gains understanding of a dynamic phenomenon via a collaborative relationship between the investigator and the participant. Generalizations are neither possible nor sought. The concept analogous to generalizability in naturalistic inquiry is transferability. Transferability is dependent upon the degree of fit between the context under study and contexts outside of the study situation. Naturalistic generalization is "more intuitive, empirical, based on personal direct and vicarious experience" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 120).

The goal of the researcher was not to generalize to every female who had experienced a transition from highly competitive sport, but rather to explore and describe the process for those women who were interviewed. The women's experiences surrounding their transitions are dependent upon many things and can differ from context to context. High context dependence is yet another assumption of the naturalist paradigm.
The fourth difference between the two paradigms surrounds the possibility of causal linkages. The naturalist paradigm does not posit the possibility of cause and effect linkages. Phenomena are seen continually interacting with each other; consequently, it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study demanded an "emergent" rather than "fixed" design (Sandelowski et al., 1989). The reality of these women was thought to be "complex, socially constructed and ultimately subjective" (Sandelowski et al., 1989).

The fifth distinction between positivism and the naturalistic paradigm involves the role of values. Positivists argue that since positivism is based on objective methodology, it is inherently value-free. The naturalistic paradigm, in contrast, is value-bound. The values of the inquirer influence the research. The research is influenced by the inquirer's focus and choice of paradigm. Furthermore, the values of the participants, as well as the inquirer, influenced this research. In seeking experiences, thoughts, and opinions of the participants, it is impossible to avoid their values or those of the researcher. Again, this viewpoint supports a naturalistic approach. An undertaking of this nature could not be accomplished by way of random subject selection. Participants who "fit" the phenomenon under study were purposively selected (see Sampling below).
Interview as Method of Data Collection

... we all think we know how to ask questions. Yet, to learn about people we must remember to treat them as people, and they will uncover their lives to us (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 374).

The method of data collection was semi-structured interviews and note taking. As long ago as 1942, Allport pointed out that if one wanted to know something about people's activities the best way of finding out was to ask them (Brenner, Brown, & Canter, 1985). In utilizing interviews, the participants were treated as heroines of their own drama and as invaluable sources of information (Brenner et al., 1985).

The purpose of the qualitative research interview, as described by Kvale (1983), is "to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 174). Kvale (1983) spoke of 12 aspects of the interview-situation:

[The interview] is: 1) centered on the interviewee's life-world; 2) seeks to understand the meaning of phenomena in his [her] life-world; it is 3) qualitative, 4) descriptive, and 5) specific; it is 6) presuppositionless; it is 7) focused on certain themes; it is open for 8) ambiguities, and 9) changes; its depends upon the 10) sensitivity of the interviewer; it takes place in 11) an interpersonal interaction, and it may be 12) a positive experience (p. 174).

The interview, as a method of inquiry, has advantages and disadvantages. Some strengths of the interview stem from what Brenner et al. (1985) refer to as "negotiation of understanding" (p. 3). Negotiation of understanding means that both parties explore the meaning of questions and
answers; that is, there is an implicit sharing of information. In addition, the interview creates a rapid, immediate response to one’s inquiries. On the other hand, the face-to-face nature of the interview allows time for bias to occur. The participant may respond in a manner that s/he believes the researcher is “hoping” to hear. Similarly, the interview is susceptible to error in interpretation, especially if precautions such as those addressed below (e.g., field notes, triangulation, member checks) are not taken into consideration.

In this study, the qualitative research interview was portrayed as semi-structured (i.e., it is neither a free conversation nor is it a highly structured questionnaire). An interview guide was utilized, which contained areas of inquiry and focused on certain themes (cf. Kvale, 1983). The semi-structured interview guide was developed through review of the literature involving transitions as well as the athletic retirement literature pertaining to male athletes.

The following areas of inquiry provided the focus of this study:

1. How does the degree of commitment to the sport role (e.g., importance of sport, devotion to sport, perceived ability) affect the transition process?

2. During the collegiate career, what educational-occupational preparation (e.g., importance of education, success in school, academic reasons for selecting university, course work related to career) influenced their current understanding and meaning of the process?

3. How did being female influence their expectations, perceptions, and experiences?

4. What was the impact of post career sport participation (e.g., primary and secondary involvement) on their transition from competitive sport?
5. What were the women's perceptions of social supports (e.g., *importance of social life, friends, relationships*) in the “retirement” process?

6. What experiences affected their adjustment to sport retirement (e.g., *reactions to leaving sport, missing involvement, happiness, and satisfaction with retirement*), and how did these experiences affect their view of the transition process?
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to designate potential participants. In purposive sampling, participants are selected because they can illuminate the phenomenon under investigation (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Participants were purposively selected so the investigator could learn about phenomenon of female athletic retirement. As the investigator, I asked the question, "Where can I find female athletes who have recently ceased competing at a high level of competition?" The Athletic Department at a midwest university was contacted for assistance.

Gaining Access

Lincoln & Guba (1985) discussed gatekeepers as the "keys to access" or gaining entry into a site or population. Just as the investigator must assess the pros and cons of completing a study, the gatekeeper must weigh the "costs and risks" of allowing access to the site and/or persons. The Associate Director of Athletics for Women's Sport was contacted to discuss the particulars of the project and garner her support for contacting coaches of women's sports. Suggestions were provided for the interview guide and how best to approach
coaches and former athletes (e.g., do not ask for much of the former athlete's time). A draft letter from the investigator to the coaches was approved for content. In addition, names, addresses and phone numbers of women's athletic coaches were provided.

Support for the study was obtained from the Associate Director of Athletics via a memo addressed to the coaches of the female sports encouraging them to assist the investigator. This memo was enclosed with a letter (Appendix A) from the investigator, requesting the cooperation of the coaches in identifying and locating former athletes thought to be potential participants. Coaches from the following women's sports were contacted: basketball, softball, gymnastics, golf, tennis, swimming, diving, track, fencing, synchronized swimming, volleyball, and field hockey.

As a result of the lack of response from the coaches, a technique referred to as snowball or chain sampling (Patton, 1990) was employed. Persons who were familiar with the subject area, as well as the participants in this study were asked to provide names of persons they knew to have experienced a transition from highly competitive sport. In this investigation, a colleague suggested contacting the first interviewee (Golfer 1), who suggested interviewing the second participant (Golfer 2). The third participant (Golfer 3) responded to the letter sent to the coaches and suggested contacting both the fourth and fifth interviewees (Golfer 4 and 5).
Through seeking names of potential participants from those who had already participated, the chain of information-rich cases grew. Snowball sampling afforded the participants the opportunity to serve as experts. Likewise, the use of snowball sampling increased the homogeneity of the sample, as participants usually refer people like themselves. Consequently, the study evolved to include only females who had participated at a highly competitive level in golf. To maintain heterogeneity or maximum variation across participants, the sampling process unfolded as the study progressed. Heterogeneity, or maximum variation was maintained across age, years of elite competition, levels of elite competition, and precipitating factors of retirement.

**Ethical Treatment of Research Participants**

Official approval to commence the study was obtained from The Human Subjects Review Board, who stipulated that a consent form must be signed by the participants and formal correspondence documenting the support of the athletic department must be included. Prior to commencing the project, agreement to participate in the study was obtained through phone contacts with the former athletes. At the time of the interview the athletes were read a script (Appendix B) describing the project and asked to sign a consent form ( Appendix C) noting their agreement to participate. The participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Furthermore, the researcher stressed that confidentiality would be maintained
for any written, publicized work from the project. At the conclusion of the interview, the participants were given a Summary Sheet to complete describing particular demographic characteristics (Appendix D).

Pilot Study

The semi-structured interview was piloted with a female, African American Division III crew team member. The interview was approximately two hours in length. The purpose of the pilot study was to debug the data collection procedures and ascertain whether or not the semi-structured interview schedule was relevant to the anticipated participants. The pilot test also served as a trial run of the recording equipment. Responses were tape recorded and later transcribed. The participant, likewise, critiqued the interview schedule. At the conclusion of the pilot interview, the former athlete suggested that questions addressing the level of participation (i.e., inter-collegiate and/or professional) be included. Likewise, the order of questions was discussed and it was concluded that the progression of questions was fine. Similarly, the consensus was that the order would likely vary for each participant. The pilot study was not included in the analysis of data.

Additional critiques of the semi-structured interview guide came from a research group of faculty and graduate students who were developing research proposals. The group suggested including "sub-" questions in case participants were not as responsive as anticipated. For example, when asked to "describe
the circumstances that eventually led to retirement," if the participant was not
descriptive in responding, one or all of the following probing questions would be
asked:

1. Can you tell me why you decided to leave competitive sport when you did?
2. Did you want to leave when you did?
3. What was your physical condition?
4. How did you view your retirement?
   a. Did you view the change as a gain, a loss or both?
   b. Did you feel positive, negative or both about the change?
5. Would you describe the retirement as gradual or sudden?
6. Do you consider the retirement permanent?
7. Was the retirement stressful? If so, describe.

The final semi-structured interview guide is presented in Appendix E. The
interview guide endured an evolution process before it was utilized in the first
interview.

Participants

The focal group sampled was comprised of female athletes who had retired from either collegiate or professional competition in golf. In order to meet
the criteria for inclusion, the female athlete must: (a) have participated in
collegiate or professional sport; and (b) be retired from elite competition. In this
study, reasons for the sport retirement included, ineligibility due to number of years of participation (participated for four years) or medical ineligibility (due to health reasons), or self-selection to retire (burn-out, frustration).

The five participants were given a number based upon interview order so as to maintain their confidentiality. Each participant was given the opportunity to select a pseudonym (when completing the member check of the results), but the majority did not prefer to do so. Consequently, a number was used to identify each golfer.

Idiographic Characteristics of the Transitional Athlete

All of the participants were Caucasian. The women ranged in age from 26 years old to 38 years old ($M = 34.20$). No one perceived herself with a disability; however, two experienced accidents that were career-altering. Three reported their sexual orientation as heterosexual, one as "gay," and one declined to respond, when completing the Summary Sheet (Appendix D).

All five of the participants played at the intercollegiate, Division IA level. Four of the participants obtained bachelor's degrees from their respective universities. The other left college prior to completing the degree to join the professional tour.

Two of the women played golf professionally on the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tour; one woman went on to play professionally on the
European Tour and the mini tour. Yet, another participant competed briefly on the mini tour, while another ended her competitive career after college.

Relationship status, likewise, varied. One woman was married; two women responded single; one reported partnered; and the other did not respond. Three of the women indicated their childhood background as upper middle class, and the other two participants responded middle class.

Occupational and community involvement varied across the participants. Three of the women maintained close involvement with golf. Post-athletic competition allowed these women to maintain their connection to their sport. Presently, two women are golf teaching professionals, one associated with Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), and the other is associated with the men's tour, the Professional Golf Association (PGA). A third woman is employed as an intercollegiate women's golf coach. Another woman is in private business, while another participant practices to return to highly competitive golf.

Table 1 describes the competition characteristics of the research sample. Level of competition ranged from intercollegiate to mini tour and European tour professionals to the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tour. Years of elite competition ranged from 4 to 15.5 years ($M = 8.40$ years). The length of time since the participants had retired from elite competition ranged from 2 years to 13 years ($M = 6.60$ years). Reasons for leaving competitive sport included exhausted eligibility, health, and self-selection.
Table 1

Competition Characteristics of the Research Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Tour Competition</th>
<th>Reason for Retirement</th>
<th>Post-Career Athletic Involvement</th>
<th>Years of Elite Competition</th>
<th>Years Away from Elite Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than 1 year (mini tour)</td>
<td>Health and Self-Select</td>
<td>Stayed w/in Golf (11 years to present)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years (mini &amp; European tour)</td>
<td>Self-Select</td>
<td>Stayed w/in Golf Amateur Status (10 yrs.)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5 years (LPGA)</td>
<td>Self-Select</td>
<td>Stayed w/in Golf (4 yrs. to present)</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years (LPGA)</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Practicing to Return to LPGA tour (1/2 yr. to present)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Expired Eligibility</td>
<td>Stayed w/in Golf (2 yrs. to present)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection, Management and Verification

Data Collection

In theoretical sampling, participants were selected because they could illuminate the phenomenon under study. All of the kinds of participants that needed to be sampled were not known in advance. Continued selection of participants was based upon the information obtained during the course of the study and the need for theoretical completeness (cf. Sandelowski et al., 1989). However, attempts to find variations of the phenomenon of female transition from highly competitive sport were accomplished by looking for pertinent comparison groups that illuminated the research focus (e.g., age, level of competition, years of competition, reason for leaving).

Sampling for maximum variation (Patton, 1990), rather than statistical purposes guided the sampling decisions. Purposive sampling focused on heterogeneity for age, years of participation, level of competition (professional or collegiate), relationship status (married, single, partnered), reason for leaving (end of eligibility, injury, self-select), and post athletic career involvement in sport (whether or not sport remained as a means of income). Although ethnic diversity and variety of sport were considered important to the study, only European American golfers were found. Golf is a sport with limited opportunities for ethnic minorities.
The first four participants were from the same cohort and no new themes emerged at the end of the fourth interview. The fifth participant’s experiences with transition were different from the other four, resulting in new themes and creating differences across level of participation. No more potential participants were part of the snowball sampling chain, and a decision was made not to search for participants from other sports so as to maintain sample homogeneity within sport.

Rigor of the Data

The researcher must attend to the development of trust at the beginning of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In so doing, the researcher is vital in establishing the credibility of the findings. My education, skills, and background in counseling assisted with developing and maintaining trust throughout the interview process. “Because the goal of unstructured interviewing is understanding, it becomes paramount for the researcher to establish rapport” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 367). Close rapport with the co-participants resulted in informed research.

In addition, my knowledge and past experience in sport (i.e., my knowledge of female athletic “culture”) also enhanced the rigor and credibility of the study. This knowledge and experience in sport enabled me to better understand the jargon associated with golf that might be difficult for a “nonmember” to understand (cf. Fontana & Frey, 1994).
Another important aspect of data processing, which enhanced the believability of the data, involved memoing or the writing of notes to oneself throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 1990; Schatzman, 1986, 1991; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Miles & Huberman (1984) discussed memoing within the context of analysis during data collection:

Fieldwork is so fascinating, and coding usually so energy-absorbing, that you can get preoccupied and overwhelmed with the flood of particulars—the poignant quote, the appealing personality of a key informant, the telling picture on the hallway bulletin board, the gossip after a key meeting. You forget to think, to make deeper and more general sense of what is happening, to begin to explain it in a conceptually coherent way. Reflective remarks, marginal remarks, and pattern coding are all a step away from the immediate toward the more general (p. 69).

Memoing (reflective remarks, marginal remarks, and pattern coding) provided a method of checking in with the data; that is, exploring and noting how the data fit with the theory. The transcriptions were read a minimum of three times each with marginal remarks, reflective remarks and coding taking place each time.

Schatzman & Strauss (1973) refer to these remarks as “field notes.” Field notes were recorded during the interviews whenever it was deemed appropriate (non threatening) and necessary, shortly after the interview (recording thoughts and observations on tape while driving home), and during the review of the transcriptions. Field notes represented an important part of the data gathered in this qualitative study and added to its richness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton,
Field notes allowed the researcher to record her thoughts, whether an insight occurred that should be clarified or a notation of a contradiction in the participant's verbal and nonverbal behavior (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The process of taking field notes, according to Lincoln & Guba (1985), "keeps the investigator alert and responsive" (p. 241). Field notes were taken during interruptions (e.g., the interviewee received a phone call) to remind the interviewer to follow up on an earlier comment, ask for clarification, as well as serve as a reminder to address particular questions. These notes became very important during the interview, especially as the interview guide was rarely followed in strict fashion. Depending upon the progress of the interview, some questions were omitted, some moved to a more appropriate place in the flow of the interview, and others were added.

Schatzman & Strauss (1973) devised a means of organizing field notes: observational notes (ON), methodological notes (MN), and theoretical notes (TN). Observational notes (ON) are messages of importance which are experienced mainly through listening and observing (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). These notes did not involve interpretation; rather they involved descriptions of what the investigator observed, felt, or experienced during the interview (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, initially, I needed to remind myself to stay in the present during the interview, especially when participants would ramble or ignore the question. Similarly, I made notes to myself so as to
not worry about what question I would ask next and thus miss valuable information. Additional observational notes involved the context of the interview and the ease of the interview.

Methodological notes (MN) are statements that "reflect an operational act completed or planned: an instruction to oneself, a reminder. . ." (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 101). MN might be thought of as observational notes involving the investigator and the methodological process. MN are messages concerning how to collect data. These notes served as reminders or instructions to the investigator. For example, after the first interview, a Pressure Zone Microphone (PZM) microphone was utilized, rather than the microphone built into the recorder, due to its sensitivity in recording voices. The use of this microphone eliminated the hum of the recorder on the audio tape, as the built-in microphone was no longer utilized. Likewise, after the first interview, I highlighted the key words on the interview guide to ensure that I covered all the areas of inquiry during the interview. After the third interview, I began to tape record notes on the drive home, as they were fresh in my mind.

Theoretical notes (TN) represent self-conscious, controlled attempts to derive meaning from any one or several observational notes (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). The investigator "interprets, infers, hypothesizes, and conjectures. . ." (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 101). One co-participant's response to her perceptions of women and sport was noted (TN) because of its
difference from the previous perceptions. This interviewee did not perceive discrimination against women in golf. An additional TN concerned the last interview and its differences from the previous four. Notes were made to remind myself to pay attention to the differences between professional athletes and intercollegiate athletes.

Notes and memos were reviewed with the peer debriefer, who read all interviews making marginal remarks, and coded one interview. These notes and codes were compared for similarities and differences to enhance the study's rigor. For example, both the peer debriefer and myself noted the unspoken yet visible link between winning/success/low score and self-worth.

The nature of qualitative research is recursive (Hoshmand, 1989; Hoshmand & Polkinghome, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Polkinghome, 1991). This qualitative research required the constant movement back and forth between the data and the emerging themes to continually and repeatedly check for their agreement and convergence (Hoshmand & Polkinghome, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Polkinghome, 1991). Data analysis occurred at every point in the research process: during the planning of the study, during data collection, and during data management as themes emerged and interpretations were refined (Huberman & Miles, 1994). This recursive movement served to illuminate the themes of the data, as well as to lend support to their trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Establishing Trustworthiness

... naturalistic criteria of trustworthiness are open-ended; they can never be satisfied to such an extent that the trustworthiness of the inquiry could be labeled as unassailable.... no amount of member checking, triangulation, persistent observation, auditing, or whatever can ever compel; it can at best persuade (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 329).

To address the charges that naturalistic inquiry is sloppy research lacking in "validity" and "reliability," the investigator must convince the audience that the findings of the analysis are worthy of notice. Establishing trustworthiness is the means toward that end.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed four components of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. These components have evolved in response to the concepts of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity within the positivistic paradigm. The following discussion describes these four criteria as well as techniques utilized to enhance the probability of increasing the trustworthiness of the inquiry.

Credibility is established if participants recognize descriptions as their own (Sandelowski, 1986). The truth value of the study is subject-oriented rather than research-defined. Participants determined whether or not the investigation was credible. Techniques employed to enhance credibility of the data were triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking.
Triangulation. The use of triangulation improves the credibility of data interpretation (Lather, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 1990). Four different modes of triangulation include the use of multiple and different (a) sources, (b) methods, (c) investigators, and (d) theories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three triangles were used in this investigation.

Multiple sources, that is, "multiple copies of one type of source" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305) were employed. In other words, several retired female golfers were interviewed.

Multiple researchers were utilized also. Research groups provided helpful insights into development of the semi-structured interview guide and formats for documenting observational notes, methodological notes and theoretical notes. Furthermore, these groups practiced coding interviews and critiqued computer programs designed for qualitative data management and analysis. Another member of the research group served as the peer debriefer (described below). Likewise, a committee member reviewed and coded two of the transcribed interviews. All of these activities enhance the credibility of this research. "Stripped to its basics, triangulation is supposed to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, don't contradict it" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 234).

Moreover, the data were discussed in relationship to several perspectives involving retirement. For instance, data were examined from the perspective of
gerontological theory and thanatological theory. Data, likewise, were presented in relationship to the Co-Essence Model of Sport, Schlossberg’s model for analyzing adaptation to transition and the process versus event perspective.

Peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is a form of triangulation which Patton (1990) referred to as “triangulating analysts.” Triangulating analysts involves two or more researchers independently reviewing the same data and then comparing the results. The peer debriefer completely coded one interview and recorded marginal notes on all the interviews. These codes and notes were compared and contrasted for consistency or auditability.

Negative case analysis. Negative case analysis involved the search for patterns and trends that did not fit within the identified patterns. These instances may be cases that support patterns, broaden patterns, cast doubt on patterns, or alter patterns altogether (Patton, 1990). G5’s experiences with leaving competitive sport were much different than the other four participants’ perceptions of their transitions from sport; and, as a result, provided for instances that broadened the analysis.

Member Checking. The participants received a copy of their transcript and were asked to add and/or delete as necessary (see Appendix F). Four of the five participants returned the transcriptions. The majority of the changes made were correcting typographical errors. One of the participants deleted some portions of lengthy responses in which she was rambling unnecessarily.
Asking the participants to accept or reject their own words is a form of member checking which enhanced the credibility of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

"Co-participants" (Gordon & Schontz, 1990) also were sent a copy of the results describing each of their perceptions of transition (i.e., the beginning of Chapter IV, which discusses the participants' perceptions of the areas of inquiry, was mailed to each participant; see Appendix G). Three of the women responded. All reported that the representation of their perceptions was "accurate" and "complete" or "just fine." One of the women corrected a few idiographic descriptors, involving the area of the country where she was raised. Mutual interactions between the investigator and co-investigators helped to ensure that the context was understood and appropriately represented (Lincoln and Guba, 1985); thus lending to the trustworthiness of the investigation.

Establishing transferability is different than establishing external validity in the positivist paradigm. In a "strict sense," transferability is unattainable in qualitative research; that is, it is not possible to develop "truth" statements that are generalizable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Naturalistic inquiry generates idiographic statements that are relevant to a particular context. The plausibility of transferring social/behavioral phenomena to other contexts is enhanced by providing rich descriptions of the specific data base (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). "Thick description" is one means of enabling interested parties to make judgments about fittingness with other contexts (Guba, 1981).
**Thick description.** Thick description is characterized by portraying the context and emotion of a particular situation. Such description goes beyond "surface appearances" (Denzin, 1989, p.83). Thick description "establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard" (Denzin, 1989, p.83). Chapter IV presents many instances of the participants' voices, feelings, and actions through direct quotation.

Dependability is established through a process referred to as "auditing" (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The auditor makes sure that there is "fairness of representation" of the data, and that the "point of view" of the data is accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, the auditor examines both the process and product of the inquiry. The peer debriefer and members of the research group served as auditors for parts of this naturalistic inquiry. All of the transcriptions were reviewed by the peer debriefer, that is, the "process" of the inquiry was reviewed for fairness of representation.

The audit is also a technique for establishing the confirmability of the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The "records" which assist with establishing confirmability are the field notes, observational notes, methodological notes and theoretical notes. All of these documents in combination make a "reflexive journal" (Guba, 1981). The reflexive journal contains notes about
methodological decisions, reflections about what is happening within the inquiry, as well as a schedule of events (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, it was noted after recording difficulties with the first interview to be sure to carry at least four audio tapes in case something goes wrong with some of them.

**Data Management and Verification**

In-depth interviews of retired female golfers were recorded via audio tape. The audio tapes were transcribed and reviewed by the investigator so as to (a) relive the interview in real time, (b) listen and note on the transcription any meaning-filled pauses or emotional displays (paralinguistics), and (c) correct any error in transcription (Swanson-Kaufman, 1986). Three of the interviews were transcribed by an undergraduate student with previous transcription experience. The other two were transcribed by the researcher who reviewed all of the transcriptions, while listening to the audio tapes. I listened to the tapes a minimum of two times and, noted corrections and deletions. Similarly, paralinguistic cues were noted in the transcriptions through use of underlining, italics, or parentheses.

One problem occurred during the recording process, possibly resulting in missing data. As it was not immediately recognized that the tape had torn, the amount of missing data was unknown. In the process of turning the tape over to record on side B, G1's tape snapped. Prior to transcription, the tape was spliced and it appeared little or no data were lost.
Open Coding

"Coding represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). In other words, coding is the system of analyzing data (cf. Highlen & Finley, in press). One type of analyzing data (i.e., breaking down, examining, comparing, and categorizing data) is known as "open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). There are three variations of open coding: line-by-line analysis, sentence or paragraph analysis, and entire document analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Line-by-line is the most detailed type of analysis, as well as the most tedious. Sentence or paragraph analysis involves coding the major idea of a particular section. Entire document analysis entails asking the question: What seems to be going on here? Entire document analysis would include searching for similarities and differences among the interviews.

This study involved a combination of all of the coding variations. Analysis began with line-by-line coding and progressed to sentence or paragraph analysis and entire document analysis. Once concepts were established and categories generated, sentence and paragraph analysis was employed. Following completion of individual analysis of the transcriptions, all of the documents were compared and contrasted for similarities and differences among emerging themes.
A computer program for qualitative data analysis, HyperRESEARCH (Hesse-Biber, Dupuis, & Kinder, 1990) was utilized to manage the data. HyperRESEARCH permitted attaching codes to meaning units of the text. Meaning units varied in length from one line to an entire page. Once codes were attached to the data, HyperRESEARCH allowed the coder to search and regroup the codes. One hundred seventy-seven codes were created. These codes were regrouped into 24 different categories. There were 14 different descriptive codes concerning the participants' thoughts about golf; consequently, these were categorized (recontextualized) into a code entitled, "Perceptions of Golf." For instance, "game of honor," "governed by economics," "humbling," "sportsmanship," "way out of southern ghetto," "professional pressure," "realized professional skills," "resurfaces as amateur," "relaxed and fun," "winning as amateur," "self-worth," "challenge," "my life," and "my identity" were all descriptive codes involving the participants' view of golf.

Codes were derived from the literature or from the interviews (i.e., "in-vivo;" Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Literature-derived codes included "male model of sport" and "role commitment." "In-vivo" codes, or words and phrases used by the participants, included "athletics as teacher" and "evolutionary transition."

Axial Coding

The last step in the data analysis process was "axial coding." During this process, the data were recontextualized by making connections between
categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Axial coding represented the beginning of the formulation of main categories. This development or regrouping was beyond properties and dimensions (i.e., beyond open coding, which is decontextualizing).

Axial coding employed a coding paradigm which involves "conditions," "context," "action/interactional strategies," and "consequences." Greatly simplified the model appears as follows:

(A) CAUSAL CONDITIONS  
(B) PHENOMENON
(C) CONTEXT  
(D) INTERVENING CONDITIONS
(E) ACTION/INTERACTION STRATEGIES
(F) CONSEQUENCES  (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 99).

In axial coding a category (phenomenon) is specified in terms of the conditions that give rise to it; the context (its specific set of properties) in which it is grounded; the action/interactional strategies by which it is handled, managed, carried out; and the consequences of those strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97).

The phenomenon was identified through asking questions of the data (e.g., What is this data referring to? What is the action/interaction about?) In other words, to what is the action and interaction directed at managing, handling, or carrying out (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)?

The causal conditions were the events or happenings that led to the occurrence or development of the phenomenon. For example, in this
study, the "end of eligibility" could lead to "leaving competitive sport."

Utilizing the paradigm model, the phenomenon of leaving competitive
sport might be diagrammed in this manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Condition</th>
<th>Phenomenon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility Expired</td>
<td>leave competitive sport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strauss and Corbin (1990) also referred to causal conditions as
"antecedent conditions." These conditions were the events or
happenings that preceded the phenomenon. Cues to locate the
antecedents in the data are words such as "when," "while," "since,"
"because," "due to," or "on account of" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The context was represented by the properties that pertain to the
phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Simultaneously, context "is also
the particular set of conditions within which the action/interaction
strategies are taken to manage, handle, carry out and respond to a
specific phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 101). In continuing
with the previous example, the paradigm model might now look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Condition</th>
<th>Phenomenon</th>
<th>Specific Dimensions of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility Expired</td>
<td>leave competitive sport</td>
<td>Leaving Competitive Sport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties of Eligibility Expired</th>
<th>Gain/ Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Change</td>
<td>Positive/Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>Internal/External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>On-time/Off-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>Sudden/Gradual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset</td>
<td>Permanent/Temporary/Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Context of Leaving Competitive Sport (under conditions where eligibility is exhausted)
Did not plan to turn professional
Planned college major around career interests
Natural progression; developmental process

Intervening conditions either acted to reinforce or inhibit the strategies employed within the particular context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These conditions were the "broad, structural context" relating to a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 103). Intervening conditions involved "time, space, culture, economic status, technological status, career, history, and individual biography" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 103).

Action/Interactional strategies represented those activities which were supposed to handle, manage, carry out and respond to a phenomenon in a distinct context under a particular set of perceived conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1990) described the action/interactional strategies as "processual" (i.e., developing over time). These strategies were implemented to manage the phenomenon. With further development of the example of expired eligibility, the paradigm model might now look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal Condition</th>
<th>Phenomenon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility Exhausted</td>
<td>leave competitive sport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Properties of Eligibility Expired
Role Change
Affect
Source
Timing
Onset
Duration

Specific Dimensions of Leaving Competitive Sport
Gain/ Loss
Positive/Negative
Internal/External
On-time/Off-time
Sudden/Gradual
Permanent/Temporary/Uncertain

Context of Leaving Competitive Sport (under conditions where eligibility is exhausted)
Did not plan to turn professional
Planned college major around career interests
Natural progression; developmental process

Intervening Conditions
Misses competition
Does not possess “drive” for professional tour
Cannot continue to play competitively in college

Strategies for Leaving Competitive Sport
Compete as amateur
Finish degree and look for employment
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the unique and common experiences of females' transitions from highly competitive sport. Results of data analysis using grounded theory described in the previous chapter are discussed here. The culture of female athletes who have experienced transitions out of highly competitive golf are displayed using the voices of these women. This chapter represents the narration of five women's stories surrounding their experiences with sport, in particular, with highly competitive golf.

Each participants' story is presented individually. The presentation begins with a brief discussion of the interview context, which was recorded in the field notes. This discussion aids in establishing trustworthiness (audibility).

The interview context is followed by a brief description of the participants. Next, each of the areas of inquiry are presented: Importance of Sport, Learned Through Athletics, Winning, Perception of Gender, Social Supports, Post-Career Sport Participation, and Transition Experiences, including a "Paradigm Model for Transition" for each participant. Finally, themes that emerged across the participants are presented: Lack of Educational/Occupational Preparation for the Transition Process, College as a Stepping Stone to the Professional Level,
Positive Aspects of Transition, Retirement Brings Unexpected Relief, Synchronicity, Change in Important Beliefs, Stay Within Sport, Perceptions of Golf, Self-Image/Self-Worth Tied to Success as an Athlete, Lack of Formal Resources, Perceptions of Winning, Either/or, Both/and, Suggestions/Recommendations for Athletes.

Golfer 1

Contextualizing the Interview

G1 missed the first scheduled interview because a meeting in a different location was longer than anticipated. The interview was rescheduled and occurred at her place of employment as a golf professional. The interview took place in her office. The day was rainy, so there was not much movement on the golf course.

When turning the tape over to record on side two, the tape broke. A few moments were lost, as it was not immediately known what the difficulty was. A different tape was used and recording began again.

Presentation of Golfer 1

G1 was born and raised in one region of the country and moved to another to play golf at the Division IA, collegiate level. She was recruited beginning in her sophomore year in high school. “I was highly sought after by many colleges and had visited several.” She won the state high school championship her senior year. This university was chosen for several reasons,
mostly related to athletics (e.g., the money the university put into the golf program and the golf schedule). Her freshman year in college she was the conference tournament champion and was her team's top player. However, during her junior year she was injured. "...after the injury, and after trying to come back and play, (I) just never could get it." The lack of proper medical care and the misconception that there was nothing physically wrong with her combined to create a long and disappointing senior year, after which she wanted "out of [golf] big time." She played in four mini tour events, which solidified her decision to go into teaching golf.

I was a pro but I did not play for 18 months because I just wanted out of it so bad, but you know when you're an athlete and you thought in two years you'd be leaving [college] and be a big time tour player and you know there aren't a lot of rec. jobs and this is talent I had; it was really what I wanted to do I guess, it must of been because I stuck with it.

G1 was extremely frustrated because golf was such a big part of her life growing up and a dominant part of her college life. The majority of G1's time in college revolved around the team and playing golf. G1 referred to the college golf experience as "sheltering."

...you're told when to eat, when to study, when to get up, when to go to practice, when you can go out. Your life is dictated and if you're on scholarship, it's dictated even more. Plus we were ranked in the top five of the country, so you are going to be a little bit more sheltered and structured. You live with the people that were on the team; you ate with the people that were on the team; you traveled with the people that were on the team. Every spring break you were with the people on the team. So, yes it was very sheltering.... [Athletes] have some opportunities that maybe
another kid wouldn't have; and it is a rude awakening when you walk out that door and you don't have somebody to run to or turn to. [It was] a very rude awakening; so it was tough; it was a hard adjustment.

Importance of Sport

G1 said that participation in sport helped her “have my own mind, have my own thoughts, think for myself and not think how others wanted me to think.” Athletics provided a means to break out of an oppression which she believed girls and women faced. In describing this oppression, G1 stated,

. . . being raised as a girl . . . is not a good way to come up. You are raised to get married, have children; not to work and not to go to college a lot of times. . . . You are demeaned and put down a lot because you are a girl or a woman.

Sport also provided G1 with the opportunity to get an education, “which every high school teacher I ever had bet I’d never make it through a college door.”

Learned Through Athletics

In addressing what she learned from athletics, G1 indicated three important things, “discipline and respect and loyalty to things, things that mean something.” Discipline helped her cope with and manage stress. She made “a lot of good friendships within golf and all over the country.”

Winning

G1 had difficulty articulating what constituted winning.

What constitutes winning...success, I think they put so much emphasis on winning even in coaching intramural golf for 5 to 10 years old, I mean these parents are incredible. Winning doesn't make you successful. Winning does not make you a great person.
That’s a tough [question]. I don’t know really how to answer that one that’s a tough one.

In clarifying the differences between her perceptions of winning now and a decade ago, G1 indicated winning was everything ten years ago.

If it took going out in weather like today [windy and rainy] and hitting five thousand golf balls, I would have been out there doing it. Today, I’d look at you like you were crazy, and I would say there would be another day. I guess I look at things that way now; there will be another day. “So you didn’t play so well today, big deal,” but if you had said that 10 years ago, winning was everything; there was nothing but that in my life at that time, and the team’s life!

Perception of Gender

G1 indicated things would have been much different for her had she been male. She faced gender discrimination along many avenues of her athletic career. She reported needing to work 65 to 80 hours a week compared to the male’s 40 to 45 hours, so she would be accepted and not thought of as “lazy.” She worked the “crap schedule,” from 1:00 p.m. to close. G1 expressed much difficulty breaking through the “old boys’ network.”

I had to work 10 times harder than the boys. I wasn’t accepted. It took eight years before I felt like I was part of the team and accepted, about six to eight years. Probably in the last two years, I have felt like part of the team. The boys call me in and ask my opinion now. That never happened before.
Social Supports

G1's parents were supportive of her participation in golf. They encouraged her to break the "stereotype" of girls not going to college because they should get married and have children "right away."

Growing up there weren't a lot of strong female role models in golf, there just wasn't. Probably the person that I was the closest too and tried to model myself after or kind of influence me somewhat would be [well known golfer]. At the time, she was a great college player . . . and then went on to be a great tour player. And she really, I think out of everybody, she got me into golf, my mother started me but, [my mentor] kind of nurtured that.

Transition from Highly Competitive Golf

Figure 3 depicts the paradigm model of transition for G1. The antecedents to G1 leaving highly competitive sport included (a) an injury, and (b) feeling burned out. The context in which the phenomenon of leaving sport was grounded included (a) undiagnosed physical problem; (b) declining performance as a result of injury; and (c) dislike for traveling. Intervening conditions which acted to inhibit or reinforce strategies and actions included (a) G1's lifelong dream to be a professional golfer on the LPGA tour; (b) she was physically fatigued from traveling and attempting to play with injury; and (c) she was emotionally exhausted from frustration of injury and decline in performance. Strategies and actions she employed to manage leaving competitive sport included (a) attempting the mini tour after college and deciding not to continue; (b) searching for employment; and (c) taking 18 months off from playing golf.
## Antecedents

Health Problems  
Burn out

## Phenomenon

Transition out of Competitive Golf

## Properties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Change</th>
<th>Affect</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Onset</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loss</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Internal/External</th>
<th>Off-time</th>
<th>Gradual</th>
<th>Permanent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Context

Injury - undiagnosed problem; not psychosomatic  
Physical difficulties continue with respect to performance  
Disliked Traveling

## Conditions

Lifelong dream to be professional golfer  
Physically fatigued  
Emotionally fatigued

## Strategies/Actions

Attempted mini-tour  
Job Search - networking  
18 months without playing golf

## Consequences/Impact

Stressed/frustrated/disappointed  
Secured employment w/n athletics  
Physical health deteriorated

**Figure 3**  
Golfer 1 Paradigm Model for Transition
Consequence and outcomes of the strategies and actions included (a) feeling stressed, disappointed, and isolated; (b) securing employment with athletics (golf); and (c) physical health deteriorating.

Properties and dimensions of the transition, additional aspects of the transition's context, included a role change viewed as a loss; negative feelings (affect) about the change; both an internal and external source of the phenomenon; onset which involved both sudden and gradual changes; and permanent in duration.

I was the top player for many years, and [then] was injured. From there, after the injury and trying to come back and play, I just never could get it. Emotionally is where I think the problem ended up. But I had a choice of one of three things: the mini tour, the European Tour or getting into the teaching end and I really hated traveling. I was gone every weekend through college, so I missed out on a lot of stuff. I really like being home with my family and my animals.... So my decision was to get into the pro shop end of it or into the teaching end of it. I did play some. I played four mini tour events, and that's what made my decision; [I] thought, "I can't do this for the rest of my life, or for any time frame." So I never played the tour, the big tour, the LPGA Tour.

G1 stated the decision to leave was when she wanted and attributed the decision to leave to emotional rather than physical reasons. Even though she had suffered an injury, she was mentally exhausted because of struggling with the sport psychologist her senior year (i.e., "the injury was all in her head"). The injury isolated her from what she had known most of her life. Furthermore, the
closed athletic environment she experienced created an even greater feeling of aloneness.

I had not gotten proper medical care... I had a doctor tell me that it was all in my head, and [he] sent me to the quote unquote “wonderful sports psychologist.” So I got brow beat a lot for a year; and that was real emotionally tough to live with because all your friends are playing golf and gone every weekend, and here you are sitting home and you have no friends, because this is all you’ve known for three years of college. All of a sudden, in your senior year, you are sitting home, and that was very difficult, not having anybody or having anybody to lean on or be there for you... So, emotionally, I left on a note where I just felt like I had been beat up for 12 months, and [I] was so happy the day it was over with, to the point of just where I wanted to get out, big time.

**Post-Career Sport Participation**

Initially, G1 accepted a position at a country club, but did not play golf for 18 months. She “needed” to get away from the competition. G1 relayed that an alumnus helped her secure the position she assumed with a recreation department. G1 has been actively involved in golf for over ten years since her intercollegiate and mini tour competition.

**Golfer 2**

**Contextualizing the Interview**

The interview took place in the home of G2, on the morning before a big party. There were interruptions of bustling to prepare the house (e.g., sweeper, flower delivery, phone calls). The interview was recorded in the kitchen. The
discussion was relaxed, and G2 was clearly an experienced interviewee. The interview was approximately an hour and a half long.

Presentation of Golfer 2

G2 experienced an accident her senior year in high school. At that time she was told she should no longer play basketball or ski. Consequently, she should choose another sport. Her physician recommended bowling, archery, or golf. G2 picked golf.

So from June through September, I hit balls everyday that summer and learned to play. I'd been around the sport; I'd had lessons as a child, but I had never really thought about it. I thought it was a rather boring sport. I had much preferred tennis and downhill skiing and basketball and never viewed myself as a golfer.

She was expecting to play college basketball for a Division I university, but opted to meet with the golf coach and was good enough to make the team. She played for three years and transferred her senior year to a Division IIA university.

... because people found out I was gay, and at the sorority and with the golf team it became a real issue. And I couldn't cope with all that pressure. At the time, I was just 19 years old. The reason why I chose [university] was to be at the school where the person I was seeing was going to go to get her master's. Particularly with the sorority, she was president and I was vice president, it was too difficult for me to stay for my senior year.

At the Division IIA school, G2 was captain of the team. She indicated this school was a "totally different environment to play golf, not nearly the caliber of players."
Importance of Sport

In listening to G2 talk about sport, it is clear that physical activity has played a very important role in her life and continues to do so.

I've played just about every kind of sport that there is. I guess the most basic thing for me is competition. I don't know how to have recreational sport as a rule. Every time I ever looked at sport, I always look at it in terms of competition since the time I was thrown in a swimming pool at 4 or 5 and started competing at 6. I've always thought of sport as competition, not as recreation. Now approaching forty, I'm having to learn that sport can be recreation. But it taught me all of life's lessons, I'll give it that.

Learned Through Athletics

G2 stated she learned many things through athletics, including “honor, and the value of hard work and dedication.” G2 reiterated, “[I] could not think of one of life’s lessons that I could not correlate with sport.” In speaking about team sport, G2 expressed that the collaborative efforts “teach you a lot of skills around working with people to get something accomplished.”

G2 indicated that her present career was similar to sport. She just needed “to learn the rules and know how to play and strategize and maneuver through the system.” The skills she learned and utilized on the golf course she employs in her career today.

Winning

When asked “what constitutes winning to you?”, G2 responded, “First place.” Her self-confidence came from attaining first place and being successful
in whatever sport she undertook. Her lack of achieving "first place" in professional golf was one of the reasons she decided to take time off.

I didn't understand the complications of the sport, and I didn't understand that you just don't tee it up and win right away. It's not that kind of sport. Going through a succession of losing... that really brought some negative self-esteem issues to the surface. I didn't understand why I wasn't winning, and everybody else in the golf industry was like, "I can't believe she's been playing only six months or a year or whatever." I was playing at a very highly competitive level. I never got that positive reinforcement saying that was good. So, I knew I was doing well and well enough to turn professional when I graduated but I still kept having these higher and higher expectations. When I wasn't able to meet those, the pressure would become more and more.

Perception of Gender

When asked to describe how being a female had influenced thoughts, attitudes, and perceptions about sport, G2 replied, "Prior to scholarships? I think I should thank my mother and some my father. I never knew that there was a difference." G2 never realized that there was a difference in terms of being able to compete, or in physical abilities, strength, and endurance. She did not view the competitions she entered in terms of gender.

G2 was one of the first women to apply to the PGA professional school.

I didn't understand that a women had just won the court case to allow us to join. I worked for a PGA professional and he said, "if you're going to be my assistant, you should join. Here's what you do, and here's your paper work." It never dawned on me until I went to my first PGA school; it was all men and me: 800 men and me! It's like, "oh, what's wrong with this picture?".
G2 admitted she had been oblivious to the oppression and discrimination that women faced because of her own success in both athletics and the business world.

[My fortunate experiences have] given me a warped sense of the world in terms of my feminism and my roots around the struggle. I just took it on independently. If there was something I wanted to do, I'd just go do it. And so, I didn't have an appreciation or a finer appreciation for some of the issues around discrimination and oppression because, in my world, I never internalized any of that; it's just kind of bounced off me.

Social Supports

Throughout her participation in athletics, G2 had many different social support systems. Her mother and father, as well as some of her peers on the tour, supported her athletic participation. G2 indicated her brother was not interested in athletics, so she was “Daddy's little boy.” She played basketball with her father and reported that he, too, “played sport all through his lifetime.”

While in junior high, G2's mother created an “organization” of concerned mothers (herself and a neighbor) who wanted to obtain equal and fair amounts of time in the gymnasium for their daughters' basketball practice. Their efforts resulted in equitable gym time for the girls' teams.

While on the European tour and the mini tour, G2 spoke of the homophobia and the lack of support of the lesbian golfers. The “golf culture” was not supportive of lesbian golfers and their partners.

The tour could define spouse very broadly; you don't have to make a public thing out of it. But at least within your internal workings,
allow these tour players' partners to come in the club house. The minute they pick up a bag for you they're not allowed to set foot inside the club house. So, you can't have lunch together; can't have dinner together; can't go to the cocktail parties together; can't do anything together; you're segregated. The tour player feels obliged to be inside and socializing with the sponsors and trying to make more contacts. [The arrangement] doesn't support the individual; nor does it support the couple.

Nonetheless, the lesbian golfers formed their own “support” group and took care of one another.

We were extremely closeted, but there was a very unique camaraderie amongst us all. Now I don't see that when I go back to visit friends on the tour. We were truly sisters in spirit. If one of us decided to go out, we would all go out. Those of us that played through college and played the tour, mini tour, and European tour, we all hung together. It didn't matter what your ability was, because we were like our own enclave. It was us and them. So, in terms of the tour supporting us; no. In terms of us taking care of each other; we did a pretty damn good job.

**Transition from Highly Competitive Golf**

Figure 4 depicts the paradigm model of transition for G2. The antecedents to G2 leaving highly competitive sport included (a) failure to qualify for the LPGA tour (i.e., Do Not Show at qualifying school); and (b) feeling pressure to perform. The context in which the phenomenon of leaving sport was grounded included (a) not performing as “expected”; and (b) indecision to continue competing on the mini and European tours. Intervening conditions which acted to inhibit or reinforce strategies and actions included (a) G2’s role engulfment; (b) she was unaware of options outside of competition; and (c) she
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Antecedents</strong></th>
<th><strong>Phenomenon</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DNS at Qualifying School</td>
<td>Transition out of Competitive Golf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to perform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Properties</strong></th>
<th><strong>Dimensions</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Change</td>
<td>Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>Off-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset</td>
<td>Sudden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Temporary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>(In) Context</strong></th>
<th><strong>(under) Conditions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strategies/Actions</strong></th>
<th><strong>(with) Consequences/Impact</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not perform as</td>
<td>Role engulfment</td>
<td>Take time off from competition to reassess</td>
<td>Struggling with self-worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;expected&quot;</td>
<td>Unaware of other options</td>
<td></td>
<td>Secured employment w/in athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecision in continuing</td>
<td>Crisis in nuclear family</td>
<td>Find job on golf course to be able to practice golf</td>
<td>Financial benefits of steady employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the mini/European</td>
<td>Desirous of remaining</td>
<td></td>
<td>Realized drinking problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tours</td>
<td>w/in golf</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relocated to be with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Crisis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regained amateur status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4**  
Golfer 2 Paradigm Model for Transition
was desirous of remaining within golf for her career. Strategies and actions she employed to manage leaving competitive sport included (a) taking time off from competition to reassess goals; and (b) find a job which would enable her to continue to practice for the Tour. Consequences and outcomes of the strategies and actions included (a) struggling with self-worth; (b) securing employment with athletics (golf); and (c) financial benefits of steady, full time employment.

Properties and dimensions of the transition included a role change viewed as a loss; negative feelings (affect) about the change; an internal source of the phenomenon; onset which was gradual; and the duration which was permanent.

G2 never seriously played golf prior to college and was not recruited to play at college. Nonetheless, she described her transition as "earth-shattering." Her perception of herself was completely and entirely as a professional golfer. It was horrifying for G2 to think of herself as anything other than a professional athlete.

I was just so horrified that I could walk out on the golf course and shoot 92 with that much pressure. I felt that much pressure that I left [the qualifying school], and went home and said, "I need to take a time out because something's not working, I don't know what it is."

The decision to temporarily leave was one she concluded was necessary because of the "negative balance in the books." After four years of competing on the European tour and the mini tours, G2 decided to take time out from competition to work as a green's person, "to sit on a mower and chill out and
decide if I wanted to continue to play golf.” The position as a green's person was short lived. The general manager of the course found out G2 was a professional golfer and moved her to the position of head golf professional at a different course. G2 was reluctant, yet knew this move would continue to provide the opportunity to practice and possibly return to tour competition. This “serendipitous” change provided G2 with an opportunity she described as “changing her life.” G2 became one of the “first women head PGA professionals in the country.” This was a position that G2 held for approximately six years. Ultimately, the decision to leave golf entirely was “made for me” when a family crisis arose and she eventually moved from one region of the country back to the other.

I think for me my transition officially out of sport was evolutionary. I think golf's unique because you can go on and have a [lifelong] career in it. For me, leaving competition was very dramatic. It was earth-shattering; the thought that I wasn’t going to be, I mean it truly becomes who you are when you're a professional athlete. It's your whole self-image, your whole self-worth. You know, when you talk to people, “what do you do for a living?” Well, there's a difference, and it's a very finite difference, between being a golf professional and a professional golfer. Those four years I was a professional golfer and was the competitor, it truly is your whole self.

Moreover, G2 still viewed her decision to leave highly competitive sport as “smoother” than it could have been since she was still involved with golf.

Luckily for me my transition was my decision; it was a little smoother and I still got to stay within the sport.
Post-Career Sport Participation

G2 competed at an elite level for four years in college and then on the European and mini tours. Following the elite competition, she became a PGA golf professional and worked in the South as a teaching professional.

I . . . was one of the first women's head professionals in the United States. Really kind of got grounded for the first time in terms of what I wanted to do with my career, what I enjoyed doing. I learned how to use my sport's background and education to make a living and I really loved it.

G2 indicated it was extremely rare for her golfing peers to think about options outside of sport for their careers.

There is never any mention of doing anything else. There's no talk [about it]. When [someone] left tour to go be a stockbroker, "How'd she ever learn to do that?" That's so foreign. You either leave to become a rep for one of the golf companies or you leave to be a club professional. Nobody ever goes and does something else outside the industry. We can't see those as opportunities or options; there's no world outside of golf.

G2's world inside highly competitive golf lasted for approximately 14 years.

Presently, she competes as an amateur in golf, as her amateur status was officially restored three years ago.

A year after I moved home I realized I was staying and that if I wanted to compete, I wasn't ever going to go back to competing as a pro so the only outlet was through an amateur status so I had to wait my two years through the USGA [United States Golf Association]; they reinstated me three years ago.
Golfer 3

Contextualizing the Interview

The interview transpired at G3's office. She had just completed a few practice holes. Her involvement in coaching her intercollegiate team for the golf season was just about complete, with one tournament remaining. G3's office was organized and neat in appearance. The walls were filled with pictures and trophies of past golfing heroes at this university.

Presentation of Golfer #3

G3 started playing golf at a young age. She attended a Division I A university and was part of a team that was "pretty competitive nationally." Likewise, because of the geographic location, she was able to play "almost year around." The team went from "nowhere" to national champions her senior year. G3 competed on the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tour for 11.5 years. She indicated that she still has her "tour card," which allows her to return at any time.

In describing her personality, G3 indicated she was "pretty hard on [her]self." She is now learning the importance of relaxing and taking a break when necessary, although her perception of taking a break is still impassioned.

I am always the kind that's pretty hard on myself and that has to get everything just right. I am pretty adamant about that. When I was out there [on tour], I do have this perfectionist-type personality. That could be good out there, and it also could be bad because you run yourself into the ground a lot trying to overcome something. Where now, if I step back, I see that and I realize that,
sometimes you just have cut back [chuckling] and just have a good
time.... Because even my definition of cutting back and having a
good time is still going to be pretty serious. But that's my
personality too.

**Importance of Sport**

G3 envisioned herself playing professional golf, as young as junior high
school. She used to imagine herself on the 18th green putting to win
championships.

Even when I was 12 and 13 years old, that was all I wanted to do.
I'd putt at night. You know, it'd be dark and I'd say, "I've got to
make this putt to win this or that." I did that all the time even at that
age. I was always pretending [that] I was already playing in
tournaments. It just never dawned on me that it wouldn't happen. I
never thought like, "If it wouldn't...." It was just when it would.

Her self-confidence and focus turned her goals into reality.

**Learned Through Athletics**

G3 indicated she learned discipline, perseverance and patience through
competition in athletics. These three things in combination helped G3 to remain
in professional golf for over a decade.

You just learn that you can't ever give up, and you have got to
always keep trying. I think I have learned a lot of patience. Some
days it just does not go real well, and you just have to really be
patient with yourself and try to hang in there. The next day you
might come out and do real well for one reason or the other. [If]
one day you are having a bad day, [it] doesn't mean you can't
come back the next day, and still make the cut, and still make a
check for the week. If you give up the first day, just because things
are going bad, you lose the whole week's pay. So, that was big
lesson I learned out there.
G3 stated the importance of learning to listen to herself and acknowledge her feelings of fatigue and overload. Recognizing those feelings, enabled her to be a more effective performer.

I learned how to pace myself, so that I don't get too overloaded. I have learned that when I am at that point, I have to stop and back away to be more of an effective performer. I think I am aware of that more now, too. Before you used to just think you could play through anything, you realize that if you take a break and you come back out and you feel fresher. You are more effective. I think that applies to golf, as well as to just the normal job for anybody.

**Winning**

G3 described winning as "improving." She did not have to attain first place to think of herself as winning. She spoke of achieving "personal bests" and how improving each year meant she was winning. In describing the realities of playing professional golf, G3 articulated how special it is to finish with the lowest score:

I guess with golf, especially on the tour, there are 144 players that start every week and only one person wins. So are you a loser just because you are one of the other 143? I don't believe that. But, you realize how special it is to win in golf, when so few people actually experience that. But that doesn't mean that you are a loser.

G3 expressed that taking control of her own game (e.g., paying attention to her own game and not becoming caught up in what other players were or were not doing), was "winning."
That's why I feel like, if I would take care of the things that I have control of and I am actually improving, then I am winning. But if I let everything slide, then, to me, that's like losing.

**Perception of Gender**

G3 acknowledged that golf was one of the few professional sports for women. Since women have their own professional tour, G3 believed they were "compared against (their) own." She stated that she did not "think of [golf] as male versus female," because females would lose the battle of strength and distance in golf.

It's always you against the game. I don't think of it as male versus female. I always see it as myself and making myself better; and doing whatever it takes to do that, not comparing myself against a man. I think that, realistically, women are never going to be as good as male players because there are physical limitations. [Men] can hit the ball a lot further. The average man versus the average lady, there isn't any comparison. But the way you can compare them, the best way is to make it where you have the same club into the green.

When asked to clarify her position, G3 indicated that the women's tour is growing now with more people attending, more matches televised, bigger purses, and increased sponsorship. Nonetheless, women "have to work twice as hard to get half as much." She stated that exposing people to the women's tour would result in those people recognizing "how good the players are. Because the average [women's] tour player is way better than the average man player." She reiterated the stereotype that women must work harder to prove their worth and must show more determination than their male counterparts,
because “it’s never going to be quite the same.” Women were and are a long way from having equal privileges.

**Social Supports**

G3 did not speak of many people who served in a support role for her. She tried to serve as her own strength and support. G3 mentioned getting to play a round of golf when she was “really young” with a woman who was already on the professional tour. She admired this professional golfer and watched her and the other women on television every chance she could so as to improve her own game. G3 was intrinsically motivated.

I just wanted to work hard for myself and not to try to measure up to someone else.... You could have put me with anybody and I would not have been idolizing them so much that it would have impaired my performance.

G3 reported that the LPGA did not offer any assistance when she was in the process of leaving the tour. She described tour players as “independent contractors.” She indicated that, on occasion, the LPGA would have consultants speak to them about how the sun damages the skin and how to protect yourself, or how to handle the press. However, there were not any concerns about players leaving the tour.

You could leave the tour at any time and no one asks any questions like, “What are you doing?” or “Why are you not signed up for the tournaments for the rest of the year?” They probably, for the most part, would not even know, until all of the sudden you weren’t around, and they’d be like, “Well, where’s [G3]?”.
Friends on the professional tour served as supports when she was considering leaving the tour.

I like to listen to what friends have to say. They know you pretty well, too, when you are trying to make decisions. I think that's a good resource, especially your closest friends that know you very well.

A colleague of G3's suggested that she consider coaching as a career option, which eventually she did.

**Transition from Highly Competitive Golf**

Figure 5 depicts the paradigm model of transition for G3. The antecedents to G3 leaving highly competitive sport included (a) feeling burned out; and (b) not having “fun” anymore. The context in which the phenomenon of leaving sport was grounded included (a) no longer enjoying traveling and being away from home/ family; and (b) LPGA tour card for life. Intervening conditions which acted to inhibit or reinforce strategies and actions included (a) G3's indecision about options; and (b) missing her home and family. Strategies and actions she employed to manage leaving competitive sport included (a) stay with the status quo; continue to play golf; and (b) discuss options/opportunities with friends. Consequences and outcomes of the strategies and actions included (a) job offer while on the Tour; (b) following through with prior Tour commitments; and (c) accepting a job offer.
### Antecedents

- Burn out

### Phenomenon

- Transition out of Competitive Golf

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### Properties

- Role Change
- Affect
- Source
- Timing
- Onset
- Duration

### Dimensions

- Gain
- Positive
- Internal
- Off-time
- Gradual
- Permanent

---

### (in) Context

- No longer enjoying traveling and being away from family
- LPGA tour card for life

### (under) Conditions

- Indecision about options
- Missing family

### Strategies/Actions

- Stay with status quo continued to play on tour
- Discuss options w/ friends

### (with) Consequences/impact

- Job offer - synchronicity
- Follow through with commitments
- Accept job offer

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**Figure 5**  Golfer 3 Paradigm Model for Transition
Properties and dimensions of her transition included a role change viewed as a gain; positive feelings (affect) about the change; an internal source of the phenomenon; onset which was gradual; and duration does not apply in this context, as G3 continues to play a few LPGA tournaments every year.

G3 spoke of never seeing herself disassociated from golf as far as career possibilities, "... it was something I knew that I wanted; sports was my first love; and if I can work that out, then that's what I wanted to do." G3 described her transition from the LPGA tour to coaching as a slow, gradual process without a lot of forethought or planning:

I never thought about leaving the tour when I was out there. It wasn't like I thought, "Well, I am doing this now. And after this time, I am going to do something..." I never put a time line on that. I never thought about, "What would I do if I wasn't playing?" I never even gave that any consideration. No, [I would describe my leaving the tour as] more gradual, and just trying to see myself in that role [coaching], if that would be something I would like. I knew I wanted to stay involved in golf because I really love golf. But I really did not want to work at a club. I could teach. I felt like I had too much experience in a lot of things I could offer young students.

One aspect of G3's gradual transition out of professional golf involved her perception that she had "burned out." Consequently, she took "a lot of time off."

And when I started to practice after that, I remember distinctly, I had entered two tournaments in Hawaii — with million dollar purses— and it came time to go, and I did not want to go. Most people would think, "You're crazy to not go to Hawaii for two weeks and play for 2 million dollars." I mean that's kind of when I knew that, "This isn't what I am looking for anymore."
G3 described her decision to leave the rigors of the professional tour as “easy” since she could return at any time. “I could still go back tomorrow if I wanted to, but I would be at a little bit lower level, because I had fallen down on the career money list.”

Post-Career Sport Participation

When deciding to leave the professional tour, G3 knew she “wanted to stay involved in golf because I really loved golf. But I did not want to work at a club. I could teach.” A colleague from the tour, as well as a women’s collegiate golf coach, suggested to G3 that she consider coaching. G3 admitted that she had not thought of any options after golf, and was not sure about coaching since a friend was just hired at her alma mater, the only place she thought she could coach. This friend helped to convince G3 that there were benefits in coaching young people wherever she might coach.

I thought to myself that I could never coach anywhere but at [my alma mater], and she was the coach there. So it wasn’t like I could coach there any time soon. Then she really talked to me a lot about how you can help people wherever you go and it doesn’t necessarily have to be at your own school. You are not a traitor for taking off. And the more I thought about it... this is pretty close to home, and it just seemed to be a good fit for me.

G3 was offered a coaching position at a university at a time when she was contemplating leaving the professional tour. Prior to filling the position, she competed in a few additional golf tournaments (e.g., the US Open and a tournament in her home town). The job offer could not have come at a better
time, and the new role met the criteria for which G3 was looking. She was able to remain in golf, to teach and coach younger players, and she realized that she no longer wanted to be traveling for 35 to 40 weeks out of the year.

Golfer 4

Contextualizing the Interview

The interview was conducted in G4's home. It was scheduled for 8:00 p.m. or later, as the children would then be in bed. Upon arriving around 8:00 p.m., G4 was in the process of putting the children to bed. The interview began around 8:30 p.m. and lasted approximately an hour and 45 minutes. We both sat in the living room on the sofa. There were several interruptions (e.g., contractors working in the basement, dog barking to come into the house, phone calls).

Presentation of Golfer 4

G4 described herself as a “sports fanatic.” She follows every major sport (baseball, basketball, football, hockey, tennis and golf); yet, she especially enjoys collegiate sport. G4 grew up in a family of avid sports enthusiasts.

G4 attended a small college for part of her first year, then returned home because she was “homesick.” She was then recruited by a large, Division IA university closer to home and decided to play golf there. She competed in Fall semester for the small college and in Spring quarter for the Division IA university. Through participating at two different universities in a single year,
G4 used two years of eligibility. Consequently, she was only able to compete for two more full years. During those final two years of collegiate competition, G4 realized that she could play professionally because she "was shooting scores comparable to what they were shooting on the tour." She did not finish her education, instead opting to turn professional after her eligibility expired.

**Importance of Sport**

G4’s identity was tied to her involvement with golf. She believed that her participation in “golf was what made people want to be around (her).” Her athletic competition was what made her who she was. With her identity tied up in golf, an accident, meant many changes and challenges to her self-confidence.

Probably part of [the adjustment struggles] was not feeling a lot of self worth, because I think in sports, at least for me, and I think for a lot of females, just gals that I’ve talked to about this, that you tend to feel like you are how you play. If you shoot 68 you are great; if you shoot 78, you are a heel for the day. I felt this way even before I got hurt, that you are what you shoot. Once I couldn’t play golf, I think I lost a lot of my sense of self worth, because I felt like golf was what made people want to be around me.

**Learned Through Athletics**

G4 talked about learning “how” to win. “There is a way to win and a way not to win.” Athletics taught her how to be a good winner; in other words, G4 learned “sportsmanship” through athletics. She modeled her game after Jack Nicklaus’ because of his demeanor on the course. In her mind the “winners look the same no matter what is going on with them.” The winners did not display
temper tantrums, or throw golf clubs, stomp around in defeat, or gloat and brag in victory. G4 indicated that she “cannot stand a bad loser.” Furthermore, G4 stated that participating in sports enabled her to teach her children about life.

I think there are other things to win at besides sports... you know, in life. I probably would not have been able to teach my kids what I think I can teach them now if it hadn't been for golf. Just not even the athletic side of it, but the mental side of it.

G4 talked about being on the “outside” of golf now and “looking in” and how that enables her to see things more clearly. She spoke of the athletes’ arrogance and expectation that people are “at [their] total beckon call.” She indicated that if she did return to competition, she would tell the volunteers and people who put on the events how much she appreciated their time and effort.

It’d be nice to have the athletes, or myself... go out of your way just a little bit to thank them and say that, “Yes, your effort is appreciated.” There’s people that volunteer that never get to see a shot. They are just driving a car all week. I think that’s really pretty neat that there’s people out there that want to give that time and effort to make it something successful.

Winning

G4 talked about how golf was a difficult sport to win.

A lot of things have to go right to win and ... somebody else has to not play better than you’ve played.... Golf is a sport that you lose far more, I mean far, far, far, far, far, far more times than you ever win. In my eight years ... my winning percentage...was not very good [chuckling]...a little over 1%.

In golf, “you have no control over how other players play,” only control over how you play. G4 indicated that when she realized that “maybe [she] did not lose,
somebody else just won... not winning became much easier." She had not lost
the tournament by not achieving first place.

Perception of Gender

G4 spoke of her perception of clear and distinct differences between
males and females, which was “not a big deal” to her. The differences she
described did not “make” one gender better than the other, rather, just “different”
from each other. G4 expressed that she “never had that sort of chip on [her]
shoulder that [women] have been slighted.” To her, “all men’s clubs” just meant
they did not want women to play there. G4 reinforced the stereotypes of women
as sensitive and emotional and men as “tunnel-visioned and self-centered.”
These differences between males and females “carry over into sports.” G4
indicated that there were differences between males and females, especially
females who have children; these women were more sensitive and in tune with
their families than either men or women without children.

Social Supports

G4 described “family” as the most important thing in her life.

I have always thought that I have had a very strong family... belief
in family and how important family is and that family is more
important than anything I have ever had or ever will have. I could
have all the money in the world and all the fame and it wouldn’t
come close to what I have in [my children] and my husband. I think
my accident probably really, really put things into perspective for
me... what was really important.... that I could have everything in
the world, but if I didn’t have my family....
Growing up there were many people supporting, G4's participation in sport. Her family was active in sport. Likewise, presently, G4's closest friend is a professional golfer. She served as a support after G4's accident. This friend and G4's husband were "the most important, and [my husband] more important than anybody... in just making me feel like it did not matter whether I would play [golf] again or not." G4 said she was fortunate to have an "extremely over-supportive" husband who was "120% on my side."

Formal institutional supports for G4 following her forced exit from professional golf were nonexistent. The LPGA did not offer "anything" to help G4 cope with her sudden exit from sport. They offered a retirement plan "based upon how you played during your career." In order to better cope with her accident and subsequent exit from professional golf, G4 sought professional counseling.

Transition from Highly Competitive Golf

Figure 6 depicts the paradigm model of transition for G4. The antecedent to G4 leaving highly competitive sport was an accident. The context in which the phenomenon of leaving sport was grounded included (a) health problems; (b) physical and emotional trauma; (c) loss of income; and (d) LPGA tour exemption for several years. Intervening conditions which acted to inhibit or reinforce strategies and actions included (a) G4's role engulfment; (b) not
## Antecedents
Health Problems

## Phenomenon
Transition out of Competitive Golf

### Properties
- Role Change
- Affect
- Source
- Timing
- Onset
- Duration

### Dimensions
- Loss
- Negative
- External
- Off-time
- Sudden
- Uncertain

### Context
- Accident
- Physical change
- Emotional change
- Loss of income
- LPGA tour
- Exemption for several years

### Conditions
- Role engulfment
- Did not leave on "own terms"
- Sudden stoppage of competition

### Strategies/Actions
- Hospitalization
- Counseling
- Practice to return

### Consequences/Impact
- Ongoing Physical Recovery
- Emotional Recovery
- Financial Recovery

Figure 6  Golfer 4 Paradigm Model for Transition
leaving on her own terms; and (c) sudden stoppage of competition. Strategies and actions she employed to manage leaving competitive sport included (a) hospitalization; (b) counseling; and (c) practicing to return. Consequences and outcomes of the strategies and actions included (a) continued physical recovery; and (b) continued emotional recovery.

Properties and dimensions of the transition included a role change viewed as a loss; negative feelings (affect) about the change; an external source of the phenomenon; onset which was sudden; and duration which was uncertain.

G4 hopes to return to the professional tour someday and views her injury as something that temporarily suspended her career in golf.

I don't know how long you can stay away from a sport that's number one, that highly competitive and number two, just the fine motor skills that it takes to play that sport I think are probably more demanding than any other sport, just because you can't have even one little thing not be right and still be able to perform. I think there are some sports you can play and hide an injury, but golf, you just seem to use everything so much, it would be next to impossible to play with any kind of even minor injury. I would like to someday play again. But, at the same time, trying to be realistic, I think it is extremely tough on me mentally to continue to hold out hope. I'd be better off either to just say, "It's over with." The hard thing is that I am exempt for seven more years, which means that [I] have earned the right to play at all the tournaments. So we'll see. I am still trying. I am not going to go play "just to play." But, if I feel like I could be at least somewhat competitive, I'd give it another shot, just.... I don't think ever again on a full time basis, but maybe a tournament here or there. It's been tough.

G4 described her transition from golf as difficult because of being "forced" to leave.
it’s tough because I know how good I used to be and not knowing whether I’ll ever be that good again is hard. It’s a hard thing to describe. Maybe it’s more of a fear that I won’t ever be that good again. That’s probably because of the way I had to end my career was not where I just steadily declined like most athletes. I think I was pretty much at the top of my [game] really heading into the best part of a golfer’s career.

In further clarifying the difficulty surrounding her transition from competitive golf, G4 addressed being “forced out” of competition:

I think it’s called “leaving on your own terms.” And I certainly didn’t leave on my terms. [pause] I guess I just feel ... I don’t want it to come across bitter, because I really don’t feel like I am bitter. But I feel cheated that I worked so hard to get to a certain level and then, soon after I reached that level this happened... after working that hard to get there. It’s just sad.

G4 mentioned it “would be better” for her if she would just make the decision that she was not going to return to the tour, then she could focus on something else.

I guess, what I meant by “it would be better for me” is that it wouldn’t be something that I am always thinking about. Which I always think about it now. I mean I dream about playing; almost every night I dream that I am at a tournament playing. It’s really weird. I think 95% of my... what I have to deal with is because of how it ended; how my career ended versus the typical phase out or whatever. I never phased out. I was going, like I said, pretty strong and still felt like I had a number of good years left.... For eight years, my whole life was the tour and every plan you make is revolving around what tournament is when.... things that you do with your family...your entire life revolves around that tour schedule... how many weeks are you going to be home that year. And to all of the sudden go from being gone 30 to 35 weeks a year to being home all the time. It’s just really a change. It’s been different.
Post-Career Sport Participation

Currently, G4 is practicing to return to the professional tour. Following the recuperation period, and the birth of her second child, she began to "really [put] forth the effort" to return to the tour. The first opportunity she had to practice was almost three years after the injury. She began to "take three or four or five days a week and go out to the club and hit balls everyday and see if [she] got any better." G4's post-career sport participation is limited to practicing to reestablish her place in the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour.

Golfer 5

Contextualizing the Interview

The interview took place in G5's parents' home. G5 had forgotten about the interview, but was still willing to participate. G5's mother was home and sat in a room adjoining the kitchen, where the interview was audio taped. The interview was approximately 45 minutes in length and seemed to be rushed, possibly because G5 was to be married in six days.

Presentation of Golfer 5

G5 grew up in a house that bordered a golf course, so she was around golf all of her life. She had plastic clubs when she was little, and she was given "real" clubs when she was 8 years old. Her mother, father and brother play golf recreationally.
She was recruited to play collegiate golf at a large university, where she played for four years. She exhausted her college eligibility and neither cared for the rigors of the professional tour, nor did she see herself as possessing the "drive" to be part of the professional tour.

Following collegiate competition, G5 worked at a private country club in the South for one season before returning to her home base. Upon returning, she participated in a few amateur tournaments in the summer before seeking employment and pursuing PGA professional status.

Importance of Sport

G5 indicated that sport was very important to her, especially since she made "it [her] occupation, and it's what [she] is around everyday." Golf is most important to her, as certain other sports "[she] could care less about."

Learned Through Athletics

G5 reported she learned to be as honest as possible and to be gracious through her participation in golf. Likewise, she learned to be a "good sportsman." She spoke of the honesty of golfers calling penalties on themselves when possibly no one else would have seen any violation; whereas, other sports are characterized by violence, acting out, and/or yelling at officials and referees. "Golfers do not act like that."
Winning

In describing "winning," G5 indicated that you could be a winner even if you lost the match. Demonstrating good sportsmanship and shaking the hand of the person with the low score would "show" that the person is a "good sportsman." G5 said that improving and/or having a good tournament would constitute winning (e.g., "I had trouble with this hole in the practice round but I played it well in the tournament.").

Perception of Gender

G5 reported that women are "discriminated against in golf" in many ways (e.g., tee times, memberships rights, and restricted play on certain days of the week). She has witnessed and experienced this discrimination.

There are just all kinds of things that go on against women. I always hear men make chauvinistic comments around the club. The comment that "women play slow." That seems to be ingrained in every man's head. There's just all kinds of discrimination that goes on. Especially that women cannot be regular members. Their husband is the main member. Then, there's restricted play during the week. Tuesday is ladies day so they can play anytime on Tuesdays. Wednesday they can play in the morning or after 3:00 p.m. It's very, very discriminating.

She expressed much frustration with the discrimination, particularly remarks attributed to a male, CBS golf analyst. The person allegedly stated that women's physical features kept them from performing at their best and that there were too many lesbians on the tour. G5 stressed that the commentator's words added to the discrimination against women and "it's not true at all."
**Social Supports**

G5's family has been very supportive of her participation in sport. So, too, is her husband to be, who is also a former intercollegiate athlete. In terms of leaving highly competitive sport, G5 did not speak of any social supports. She viewed her transition as a "natural progression" and never really thought about any type of "support" for approaching and/or coping with the transition.

**Transition from Highly Competitive Golf**

Figure 7 depicts the paradigm model of transition for G5. The antecedent to G4 leaving highly competitive sport was expired eligibility. The context in which the phenomenon of leaving sport was grounded included (a) did not envision herself as a professional golfer; (b) planned college major around career interests; and (c) change was part of the developmental process. Intervening conditions which acted to inhibit or reinforce strategies and actions included (a) finished intercollegiate competition; and (b) missed "college" life and teammates. Strategies and actions she employed to manage leaving competitive sport included (a) job search; (b) moving to accept job; (c) competing during the summer; and (d) revisiting job search. Consequences and outcomes of the strategies and actions included (a) accepted seasonal position in one region, then seasonal position in another region; and (b) pursuing PGA professional status.
**Antecedents**

Eligibility Exhausted

**Phenomenon**

Transition out of Competitive Golf

**Properties**

- Role Change
- Affect
- Source
- Timing
- Onset
- Duration

**Dimensions**

- Gain
- Positive
- External
- On-time
- Gradual
- Permanent

**(in) Context**

Never envisioned self as professional golfer to remain in athletics

Planned college major around career interests

Part of developmental process

**(under) Conditions/Strategies/Actions (with) Consequences/Impact**

- Never envisioned self as professional golfer to remain in athletics
- Planned college major around career interests
- Part of developmental process
- Finished collegiate competition
- Missed "college" life and teammates
- Job search
- Return to midwest
- Competed during summer
- Changed positions; pursuing
- Job Search revisited
- PGA professional status
- Accept job in south (seasonal)
- Accept job in midwest (seasonal)

**Figure 7** Golfer 5 Paradigm Model for Transition
Properties and dimensions of the transition included a role change viewed as a gain; positive feelings (affect) about the change; an internal source of the phenomenon; onset which was gradual; and the duration which was permanent.

G5 planned her college major around her love for golf, pursuing a baccalaureate degree in recreation education. She did not see professional golf as an occupation for herself. She questioned whether or not she had the "drive" to be a member of the LPGA tour, and saw the tour as a "hard life," not conducive to marriage and a family.

In reflecting upon leaving highly competitive collegiate golf, G5 stated she missed the camaraderie of the team, college life, traveling, being around people her own age all the time, and the competition. Nonetheless, she viewed the transition as developmental, "just a change that came in my life." The experience of playing collegiate golf was always positive. She indicated that "it was a good time" to stop playing competitively because she "had to get into something for an occupation." She thought about teaching as a profession, but ultimately selected recreation education as a major because

...I always thought I'd either be... somewhere in the golf business. I either thought I'd be playing or teaching. So that's something that I think I always thought I'd be doing.

Post-Career Sports Participation

G5 relayed that golf was "very important" to her. She pointed to her college degree (recreation education) and chosen career (pursuing PGA
professional status at a private country club) as indicators of her commitment to
continued involvement with sport.

She continued to play in Pro-Am tournaments as often as possible.
Likewise, she has participated in training and conferences to earn her PGA
professional status. Her career, at this juncture, is seasonal employment, as the
country club closes for the winter season. She indicated that during the off-
season she finds something else to do; however, she would prefer to work year
around. She mentioned that someday she might entertain relocating to a climate
where she could work 12 months out of the year, possibly in the West.

Paradigm Model Summary

Based upon the paradigm models, none of the participants left highly
competitive sport for exactly the same reasons. One woman left because of
health reasons (G4); another woman left because of burn out (G3); yet, another
left due to a combination of health reasons and burn out (G1); one woman’s
transition out of sport was due to failure to meet expectations (pressure) (G2);
and finally another left because of expired eligibility (G5).

Table 2 depicts the properties and dimensions of the transition process,
which included role change, affect, source, timing, onset, duration, and an
approximation of the time to complete the transition. Three of the participants
described their role change as a loss (G1, G2, G4). The other two spoke of their
role change as a gain (G3, G5). The overall affect accompanying the process of
Table 2

Properties and Dimensions of the Transition Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Golfer</th>
<th>Role Change</th>
<th>Overall Affect</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Onset</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Temporal Dimension (Approximation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>Loss</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Off-time</td>
<td>Gradual</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>Loss</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Off-time</td>
<td>Sudden</td>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3</td>
<td>Gain</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Off-time</td>
<td>Gradual</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4</td>
<td>Loss</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Off-time</td>
<td>Sudden</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>3+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G5</td>
<td>Gain</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>On-time</td>
<td>Gradual</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
leaving sport was more negative than positive for those who described their role change as a loss (G1, G2, G4). On the contrary, the two who described their role change as a gain overall related more positive than negative feelings about the transition process (G3, G5).

For three of the participants, the source of the transitions was internal; that is, the participants decided it was time for them to leave sport (G1, G2, G3). For the other two, the source of the transition was external; that is, the decision to leave sport was made for the participant because of health reasons (G4) or the end of eligibility (G5).

In comparing themselves to other professional golfers, the timing of leaving competitive golf was off for four of the participants (G1, G2, G3, G4). These women expected their golfing careers to be longer; retirement was not "supposed" to be at that time. The other participant competed the amount of time she had planned (G5).

The onset of three of the participant's transitions could be described as gradual (G1, G3, G5); the other two could be described as sudden (G2, G5). The duration of three of the women's transitions was viewed as permanent (G1, G3, G5). Another participant viewed the duration of her transition as uncertain (G4) and another thought of it as temporary (G2).
Emerging Themes

There were fourteen themes that emerged in the data across participants. The following themes and sub-themes are presented: Lack of Educational/Occupational Preparation for the Transition Process, College as a Stepping Stone to the Professional Level, Positive Aspects of Transition (Retirement Brings Unexpected Relief, Change in Important Beliefs, and Synchronicity), Perceptions of Golf, Negative Aspects of Transition (Self-Image/Self-Worth Tied to Success as an Athlete, and Lack of Institutional Resources), Perceptions of Winning ("either/or" and "both/and"), and Suggestions/Recommendations for Other Athletes. Each of the themes is accompanied by thick description to enhance the trustworthiness of the data.

Lack of Educational/Occupational Preparation for the Transition Process

For four of the participants (G1, G2, G3, G4), education had little to do with planning for a career. Choice of university and major, for the most part, had little to do with academics; rather, the decision depended upon caliber of the women's golf program, scholarship money, and closeness to home.

G1 reported being recruited by "many of the major colleges," and visiting several of them. Her decision to attend a large midwestern university was mainly because of the golf program and the money the university committed to it. She was also impressed with the university's willingness "to work with me" concerning a learning disability and some problems with school. Nevertheless,
the driving force to go to college was to gain the opportunity for additional practice and training for the professional ranks.

When she was in school and even shortly after her graduation, she did not feel very positively about the value of her education. G1 expressed that the time commitment to athletics limited her choice of college major. Due to the travel time and the subsequent time away from the classroom, it was too difficult to be a pre-veterinarian, pre-medicine, or pre-nursing major, as G1 and many of her friends retrospectively indicated they might have pursued.

I think a lot of the girls back in [year] and before me were limited to what they could do to hold down this golf schedule. I can only go into recreation, basically that's how it was. You could miss classes and get away with it.... If I had my choice and could go back to first grade, I would change my whole life style. I would change my whole life on education. And again this goes back to, "Oh, it's okay if [G1] gets C's and D's," but if my brother came home with that it would be big time trouble. I would have liked to have done something else. Definitely have been in a different field. I would have chosen another career. No doubt in my mind.

Nonetheless, in discussing the importance of her education, retrospectively, G1 indicated her education was the key to her current employment success.

So it [my education] opened a lot of doors for me, it opened a tremendous amount of doors for me, to get into places to do deals with sponsorships, networking again that way. Personally, education like I'd said if you had asked me this ten years ago, I'd said "Ah". Probably ten years ago it wouldn't have mattered, but once I realized that it's helped me get to the point to be a Director of Golf at a major golf course in [this location]. I mean, you can't tell me that they would have hired me if I just had a high school education, there's no way. So looking back, now there are so
many people looking for jobs and hunting for jobs and you’ve got to be the best of the best anymore and if you do not have a college education, it isn’t going to happen.

G3 wanted her college degree as a back up, in case she did not make the professional tour. She stated she “never thought about leaving (college) early,” but that “sports was my first love and if I can work that out then that’s what I wanted to do.”

There again with school, that was something I always knew I was going to graduate from college. I never thought about leaving early…. I majored in [business]. I can’t say that I even used it other than maybe keeping my records for when I was on tour and now with my team’s budget. But, that was something that might have helped me with my golf that, “Well, if that doesn’t work out, I can always be [in the business field] because I have my degree and I can go get my CPA.” But, [professional golf] was something I knew that I wanted.

G4 left the first college she attended because she was homesick. She stated that another university recruited her that had a “solid [women’s golf] program and offered her a “full ride.” In addition, this university was closer to home. She did not finish a bachelor’s degree, instead leaving for the professional tour. She said that, “Golf was my life. I couldn’t imagine anything else.” Following her accident, she contemplated returning to school, but presently was not ready to undertake such an endeavor.

G2 majored in what she enjoyed, recreation education, but had no plans to obtain a career anywhere but professional golf. She attended two universities, just as G4 did. She did not speak of plans to utilize her college
education to obtain future employment. However, she felt "grounded" for the first time, when she was able to combine her love of sport and competition with her education.

G5 was the only one of the athletes who began college with the intention of formally utilizing her college education for career purposes. G5 did not foresee herself playing at the next level, so she chose a major that would afford her the opportunity to obtain employment in a sports-related area. G5 stated that she selected her major based upon her career goals, not because other athletes were in the major or because recreation education was an "easy" major to maintain eligibility.

It [recreation education] was something that I figured that would be a good major for me with what I was thinking I was going to do. A lot of people on the golf team did that major too. It was something a lot of us seemed to do. I didn't do it because they were doing it. I did it because I thought it would be a good major for me to do.

Additional discussion with G5 revealed that she believed her educational experiences did prepare her for her occupation and growth as a professional. Reluctantly, she conceded that the course work in recreation education had helped on her journey to become a PGA professional:

[My education] does [help] a little. I don't know if it helped tremendously. But the study of sport — because that's what my major was basically — some of the classes, like kinesiology [did] nothing. I did not need to take that. But, some of them, like the ones on recreation and things like that, probably helped some, just to have background knowledge.
Lifelong learning was also a point of interest for G5. She spoke of the importance of continuing education, as the "technology" of the sport of golf changes so rapidly.

College as a Stepping Stone to the Professional Level

Four out of five of the athletes began their college experience with the intention of becoming a professional golfer (G1, G2, G3, and G4). For these women, college was the opportunity for additional practice and training for the professional ranks.

I basically remember telling an assistant athletic director in study hall, my sophomore year, first quarter that I didn't need to learn how to read; I didn't need to know how to do this stuff because I wasn't going to be here much more than 4 or 5 more months.

I have to remember that I was 16, 17 years old when I was getting into [competitive] golf, and I didn't know how to translate not always winning to not being successful at golf. . . . I was playing at a very highly competitive level. I never got that positive reinforcement saying that was good. So, I knew I was doing well, and well enough to turn professional when I graduated. . . .

Yes, even when I was 12 and 13 years old, that was all I wanted to do. . . . It just never dawned on me that it wouldn't happen. I never thought like, "If it wouldn't..." It was just when it would.

. . . my junior or senior year in college. . . I started shooting scores that were comparable to those that they were shooting on the tour.
Positive Aspects of Transition

Four positive aspects of transition that were noted in the data were “Retirement Brings Unexpected Relief,” “Synchronicity,” “Change in Important Beliefs,” and “Stay Within Golf.”

Retirement Brings Unexpected Relief. Everyone except G5 found that their retirement brought “relief.” Relief from (a) pressure to perform and win, (b) financial struggles, (c) being in the spotlight, and (d) burn out and constant traveling. These four women (G1, G2, G3, G4), whose lives had revolved around participating in sport and whose self-image was tied to athletics, were pleasantly surprised with the “opportunity to be normal.”

Really for me the opportunity to be “normal” has been, in a lot of ways, refreshing not to have . . . the feeling that people stared at me wherever I went because they knew who I was, or not to have people tugging at me all the time to do interviews or to make this appearance or that appearance. There’s a lot more to life than just the game.

Part of the reason why I enjoy [competition] now more is I don’t drink, I don’t have to worry about where my next meal’s coming from. I mean, all the scenario that made trying to compete as a professional very difficult, they aren’t there now. And it really is for fun!

I didn’t think I’d ever be this happy. I really didn’t. Because you’re bred or ingrained in you’re head that you’re going to play the tour, you’re going to be a great tour player. Once that dream wasn’t going to come true and I knew about when it wasn’t going to happen, I thought I would be totally devastated and actually I was totally relieved, just really relieved that I would be able to settle down have a home, live normal and have friends.
I came upon a time where I just felt like I wanted to stop traveling so much, especially with golf, I mean I was gone 40 weeks out of the year. Basically what happened was I just did not want to leave home. I was still practicing but it wasn't as fun for me anymore.

**Synchronicity.** In the process of leaving the tour, two of the women found themselves “in the right place at the right time.” Both G2 and G3 were approached by prospective employers to take the positions which kept them within the sport. As serendipity would have it, the town that I had set up as home base down [South] happened to have a job become available and I applied as a green's person to sit on a mower and chill out and decide if I wanted to continue to play golf or what I wanted to do... Here I am mowing greens, and this general manager comes down and says, “I understand you are a golf professional; you're our new head professional at this other club.” It was still a job and they were still paying me and at that point I had no money and I needed a golf course to practice at if I was going to continue to participate at a competitive level.

I got some good recommendations from other players that went to [university] that played on the tour and knew me from the tour. . . . Probably like any job, it always helps to have those people calling in for you. The tour gave me an opportunity to know those people and I think that's part of the reason . . . I was offered the job. . . .

**Change in Important Beliefs.** The transition typically brought with it time for reflection and examination of values. This reflection afforded the women an opportunity to review and change some of their important beliefs. Each of the five women described a “change in beliefs” she had experienced as a result of her athletic participation: trusting own
judgment, challenging perfectionistic tendencies, realizing skills, valuing family, and being honest.

I trust my own judgment. I believe in myself and I do not have to have someone standing behind me saying, “You can do it.” I can do that for myself. I really feel that I am very disciplined. . . . It’s okay if I make mistakes now, no big deal. Nothing’s a crisis where it can’t be fixed, or can’t be taken care of in some way or another. I am more comfortable. I have really calmed down to the point of realizing it’s okay to be wrong, or it’s okay to make a mistake; ten years ago it was not.

. . . it’s honesty. I mean [honesty] is just pervasive in how I operate my life, and [my life] is so much freer this way: The more I practice it and become more rigorous with it and some of it has to do with my sobriety and some of it has to do with the game. But it’s clearly the most overriding and sometimes harmful feature in my life. Because I’ll be honest with people if they ask me.

I think when I was out [on tour]. . . I do have this perfectionist-type personality. That could be good out there, and it also could be bad because you run yourself into the ground a lot trying to overcome something. Where now, if I step back, I see that and I realize that sometimes you just got to kind of cut back [chuckling] and just have a good time.

I have always thought that I have had a very strong family... belief in family and how important family is and that family is, at least to me, more important than anything I have ever had or will have. I could have all the money in the world and it would not come close to what I have in [my children] and my husband. I think my accident probably really, really put things into perspective for me. What was really important. . . that I could have everything in the world, but if I did not have my family. . . .

In college I could not help anybody learn to swing. I did not know how to do that, now I do. I knew how to swing. I knew
how to do it myself, but I never knew how to teach it. Some of the girls did. Some of them knew how to teach. 'Oh, [golfer] I see you are doing this.' I was like, 'Oh, really?' I could never do that. I could not do that. I just see a swing. But now I see what goes on here and there and am learning more and more how to teach.

My responsibility is better. I am more responsible. When I was in college, it was sometimes if I didn't want to go to class or something, I wouldn't go. I can't just do that for work. I have to go to work. I feel that I am a lot more responsible than I used to be.

Stay Within Golf. Staying within golf was definitely a positive experience for four participants (G1, G2, G3, G5). None of the women wanted to leave the sport entirely when her competitive days were over. Presently, one of the women (G4) is practicing to return to highly competitive golf. After their days of highly competitive sport were finished, four women (G1, G2, G3, G5) exercised a choice to remain within sport because of their love of the sport.

I knew I wanted to stay involved in golf because I really love golf.

I spent six years with the club and was one of the first women's head professionals in the United States. Really kind of got grounded for the first time in terms of what I wanted to do with my career, what I enjoyed doing. I learned how to use my sport's background and education to make a living and I really loved it.

I played golf all my life. I couldn't think of anything else. . . . I just decided that the golf business was where I wanted to go.

. . . [golf] was really what I wanted to do, I guess. It must of been because I stuck with it.
Perceptions of Golf

Four women characterized golf as “discriminatory” in some manner. This discrimination was identified as based on gender, race/ethnicity, or economics. These four participants (G1, G2, G4, G5) indicated that the discrimination both inhibited and prohibited some persons from playing golf (i.e., not everyone who possibly could play golf obtained the opportunity to do so).

Obviously, there aren't many [races] that play golf. I think it just happens to be a sport that is governed by economics. The basketballs, the footballs, the baseballs are sports that aren't expensive to play. Golf happens to be a sport that is very expensive to play. It’s unfortunate... I would love to see kids, all kids, be given the opportunity to play golf.

Unlike basketball you can't play it everywhere. You have to belong to exclusive country clubs as a child to generally learn it... In terms of golf, it is very white, very elitist.

There’s just all kinds of discrimination that goes on. Especially, women can’t be regular members. That’s puts all kinds of limits on them. Their husband is the main member. A single woman can’t join [a Country Club] by herself.

It is real interesting how [golf] works... the old boys’ club is what I call it.

The other participant, G3, did not believe that people were restricted from playing golf because of race or gender; exposure to the sport was an economic issue. She indicated that anyone who wanted to play the game could, if the person was to try.

... there's a lot of people that are very poor that will never be exposed to golf. And it's just kind of more where you are; where your background comes from, and if you get exposed to it. It just
depends on if you really like it. You can make the sacrifices that it takes, like Lee Trevino. He was very, very, very poor. . . . he just got a job at the golf course. He wanted to learn, so he worked there. He got to know people and they ended up being his sponsors and he got in tournaments and on his way. So, it would be a very poor excuse to use race or gender or anything as a restriction in golf. It all comes down to how bad you want it. I think anyone can make it happen if they want it bad enough. I really do.

Three of the participants (G2, G4, G5) discussed the relationship between golf and sexual orientation. Homophobia was evident in their comments. In addition, the invisibility of the lesbian golfer and the lack of support for the player and relationship was mentioned.

I don't know if [CBS analyst] said [derogatory comments about the women's tour] or not. That's not really any of his business. . . . it just further adds to the discrimination. Even to say women can't swing the club the same way because of their physical features...

That's not necessarily true at all. . . . It's not his business. He should not be saying that in front of the whole world.

I would hope that the fans are there to watch the caliber of play by women, not women who might or might not be lesbians that also happen to play golf. I don't see the connection there. I don't see where it hurt the LPGA whether or not somebody prefers to be a lesbian or not. . . . I just think that it is nobody else's business and that should not impact the knowledgeable fan and whether or not he goes to watch the LPGA.

. . . the LPGA and everybody under them have always denied that there are lesbians who are participating in the sport. And from that attitude proliferates this oppression. . . . what happens is it doesn't support the individual, nor does it support the couple; then if the couple does stay together, the reason they do is because they leave the tournament sites. They travel in a mobile home; the minute they leave the 18th green, boom they're gone. They don't even stay on site; they go practice somewhere else, they go eat somewhere else, and so they're not a visible part of the tour. It's just a vicious circle.
Self-Image/Self-Worth Tied to Success as an Athlete

The majority of the difficulties surrounding the athletes' transitions from sport revolved around the connection between their self-worth and their athletic stature. Three of the golfers' identities were tied up with their perceptions of themselves as "athletes." G1, G2, and G4 perceptions of self-image and self-worth involved winning and success as a golfer and/or the status of being a member of either the professional tour or the intercollegiate team.

I think when I was in school it made me more cocky to be up on a pedestal compared to anyone else. When I walked into a room, at that time people knew who I was, so that was like a big boost.

I think for me leaving competition was very dramatic. It was earth-shattering, the thought that I wasn't going to be, I mean it truly becomes who you are when you're a professional athlete. It's your whole self-image, your whole self-worth.

For eight years, my whole life was the tour and every plan you make is revolving around what tournament is when. Things that you do with your family... your entire life revolves around that tour schedule. . . . [my identity] revolved around golf. . . . [my] whole life was the tour. . . . Once I couldn't play golf, it was like, I think I lost a lot of my sense of self worth. . . . because you feel like, or I felt like golf was what made people want to be around me.

Lack of Formal Resources

Another area of concern for all of the athletes was the lack of available resources to cope with the change (i.e., institutional support). All five of the women indicated that they received no institutional support at the time of their disengagement from competitive golf (i.e., the professional tours [LPGA, mini
and European] and the intercollegiate athletic departments had no formal services available to these women).

The LPGA does not do anything.

. . . there's nothing. You are like independent contractors out there. . . . There wasn't anything, you could leave at any time and no one asks any questions, like, “What are you doing?” or “Why are you not signed up for the tournaments for the rest of the year?” They, for the most part, would not even know, until all of the sudden you weren't around and they'd be like, “Well, where's [golfer]?”

It is a rude awakening when you walk out that door and you don't have somebody to run to or turn to, a very rude awakening. So it was tough, it was a hard adjustment those first 6, 8 months . . .

I guess it was just something I did. I don't know that anybody really helped me.

Perceptions of Winning

The participants either thought of winning as a “both/and” (win-win) possibility (G3, G5) or saw it in an “either/or” (win-lose) position (G1, G2, G4). The “both/and” philosophy is part of the process model of sport and the “either/or” philosophy is an aspect of the outcome model of sport. With the “both/and” philosophy, there is room for error; perfectionism is not the goal of the athlete, and winning is not everything. The “either/or” philosophy emphasizes competitiveness, extrinsic reward, and winning; winning is the only thing.

Either/or

. . . winning was everything, break any law, do whatever it took, I don't believe that now. . . . 10 years ago. . . winning was
everything; there was nothing but that in my life at that time and the team's life.

... [winning is] first place.

I didn't ever want to gloat in winning or make other people feel like they lost. ... losing is part of any sport. Not everybody can win all the time, no matter what sport you are playing. ... I don't like losing anymore than anybody else does, but, at the same time, I can realize that, maybe I didn't lose, somebody else just won. I think that was hard for me to learn, but once I did learn it, it made not winning much easier. Maybe somebody else just played better. ... I don't want you to think that I wanted to lose and smile at the same time. I was not happy about losing but I didn't want to degrade what somebody else had accomplished.

Both/and

Improving is winning. ... if you do well and are setting a lot of personal bests and firsts for yourself then you are making progress. ... that you keep improving each year; making those personal bests.

Maybe you played really well and maybe you didn't win the tournament, but you can still feel really good about yourself and say, "Hey, I had a really good tournament; maybe I didn't win the tournament, but I did this well or I had trouble with this hole in the practice round but I played it well in the tournament." You can always try to find something positive about what you've done.

Suggestions/Recommendations for Athletes

Each of the five participants had advice for other athletes, whether they were young and contemplating high level competition, older and thinking about retirement, or someone who suffered a career-altering accident. Four of the women's suggestions (G1, G2, G3, G4), ironically, were based upon the "do-as-
l-say, not-as-I-do" philosophy. For instance, G1 who described herself as a "couch potato":

Stay active. Don't sit on the couch. Do something. It doesn't have to be your sport, but try and find something to do.

G2 and G4 who were "engulfed" in their roles as athletes and could not see themselves as anything but professional golfers.

... you are so focused that you don't realize there's another world. And you don't understand there's life after sport. There's no room in your life for anything but that. ... in your off seasons, use that time to build whatever business it is that you want. Start building another world for yourself. ... whatever you want your other life to be, don't wait to start that at the end of [your athletic] career. ... you'll do much better if you're balanced rather than lopsided.

... there's a lot more to life than just the game.

G3 who was no longer enjoying her experience as a professional golfer, spoke of a way to quickly exit, rather than ponder and explore the decision as she did.

You either do it or you get out. ... If you are not enjoying it or getting worn out all the time, then it's time to find something else. ... Don't just do something halfheartedly.

Other suggestions from the participants involved the importance of education. Two of the women who obtained bachelor's degrees (G1, G2) stressed the importance of academics, advising athletes to remember they are students, too.

... stay in school because you never know what's down the road. You never know when you are going to get hurt, you never know if you're going to make [the professional ranks], you never know if
there’s going to be sponsorship money for you to make it. I mean the most important thing is to get your education. That is far beyond the most important thing.

... abilities change for whatever reason. Particularly in golf and tennis, you can hit a slump and all of a sudden your services are no longer needed. You really do finish your degree and you really do [need to] make good use of the time you spent at the university and get a diploma.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter began with the presentation of each of the participants, as well as a brief discussion of the interview context. Each participant’s paradigm model of transition was depicted. Likewise, the women’s views of the areas of inquiry were reviewed (Importance of Sport, Learned Through Athletics, Winning, Perception of Gender, Social Supports, Transition from Highly Competitive Golf, and Post-Career Sport Participation). Thick description was utilized to present the participants’ views in their own voices, including their thoughts, feelings, actions and interactions. Likewise, emerging themes were presented through the use of thick description.

Chapter V represents the discussion of the participants’ perceptions with respect to the existing literature on athletic retirement. In addition, limitations of the research and suggestions for future research are presented.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The unique and common experiences of female athletes' transitions from highly competitive golf have been described. In this chapter, the important characteristics of these experiences are discussed in relationship to the existing literature (i.e., literature describing male athletes' retirement from sport). Likewise, the contribution to the field of sport psychology and implications of the study are addressed. Finally, limitations and directions for future research are presented.

Much of the documented literature surrounding athletic retirement is anecdotal data, limited in scope, and journalistic in nature (Werthner & Orlick, 1982). Some researchers have begun to methodically examine disengagement from sport; however, their research has ignored females. The present research adds to the existing base by providing an in-depth and systematic exploration of female athletes' experiences of transitions from highly competitive golf.

These findings have important implications for sport psychology, as well as for other concerned parties who work with athletes at any level (youth sport, interscholastic sport, intercollegiate sport, professional sport, and/or Olympic sport). Athletic departments, professional sport associations, coaches, parents,
athletic counselors, and athletes need to be aware of and familiar with the experiences and many options and opportunities available to those leaving competitive sport. This awareness and knowledge will hopefully enable everyone to be better prepared for challenges that leaving sport may render. This knowledge could be beneficial in implementing informative programs and workshops, as well as individualized sessions for persons preparing to leave sport.

**Overview of Paradigm Models**

The individual paradigm models were developed via grounded theory's axial coding. Axial coding employs a coding paradigm which involves "conditions," "context," "action/interactional strategies," and "consequences." In axial coding a category (phenomenon) was specified "in terms of the conditions that gave rise to it; the context (its specific set of properties) in which it was [grounded]; the action/interactional strategies by which it was handled, managed, carried out; and the consequences of those strategies" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97).

Six properties and corresponding dimensions of the transition were noted: role change, affect, source, timing, onset, and duration (cf. Schlossberg, 1981). Schlossberg noted that these six properties/factors, depending upon how they were perceived by the individual, affected transition: role change (gain or loss), affect (positive or negative), source (internal or external), timing (on-time or off-
time), onset (gradual or sudden) and duration (permanent, temporary, or uncertain).

According to Schlossberg (1981), the following combination of perceptions would make for the most ease in transition: role change as gain, internal source, “on-time” timing, gradual onset, and duration either permanent or temporary depending upon the conditions of the transition. In addition, Schlossberg (1981) acknowledged that most transitions would involve both negative and positive affect.

Brief summaries of each of the participant’s transition process are presented. Following each summary is a discussion of the transition experience based upon grounded theory.

**Golfer 1**

G1 made the decision to leave golf and stated it was when she wanted it to be (internal). She had a period of over a year to contemplate her options (gradual), which helped to compensate for the loss and all the negatives. She attempted tour events at the next level and did not enjoy the experience, although she thought for many years she would be a professional golfer (off-time). She had no plans to return to competition and “wanted out” (permanent).

There were three of the six factors affecting G1’s perception of transition which, according to Schlossberg’s theory, would make for a smooth process (internal source; gradual onset; permanent duration). On the other hand, there
were three factors which would, according to Schlossberg, would be indicative of a difficult transition (loss in role change; negative affect, off-time). In examining other factors affecting adaptation to the transition, G1 experienced a lack of institutional supports, a lack of intimate relationships, and a family unit a thousand miles away. Adding to the mix, G1, during her senior year, suffered an injury, the nature of which was unknown and untreated. Weighing all of these factors, G1’s resources and deficits seemed out of balance and more heavily weighted on the deficit side.

G1 described a period of “6 or 8 months” after leaving highly competitive golf that were stressful, excluding her final year of college. After the 6 or 8 months, she indicated things “fell into place” (i.e., connecting with alumni and finding a job within her area of study, which revolved around golf). According to Schlossberg’s (1981) model, G1 was “moving from being totally preoccupied with the transition to integrating the transition into her life” (p. 7). G1 was adapting to her transition; she was moving from “pervasiveness” to “boundedness” (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 7).

Golfer 2

G2 made the decision to temporarily take time away from highly competitive golf to reevaluate her goals (internal source). Her decision was sudden, after failing to earn the LPGA tour card at the qualifying school. She
experienced loss of identity and self-esteem (negatives). G2 left competition without another job in mind, expecting to return to the tour (temporary; off-time).

There were two of six factors affecting G2's perception of the transition, which would lead toward a smooth transition (internal source; temporary duration). The other four factors were indicative of difficulty in transition (role change as loss; negative affect; off-time; sudden onset). G2 experienced a lack of institutional supports and a family unit that was over a thousand miles away. She spoke of friends who served as social supports. Weighing all of these factors, G2's resources and deficits seemed out of balance and more heavily weighted on the deficit side.

G2 indicated a job serendipitously "finding" her after leaving professional golf (2 to 3 weeks). She was surprised to obtain a position within golf which afforded her the opportunity to utilize both her education and love of sport. G2 was beginning to integrate the change in her life; she began with the realization that there was something else for her beside competition.

Golfer 3

G3 made the decision to leave after much contemplation (internal). She viewed the role change as a gain and thought positively about her experiences. Nonetheless, she felt there was still more she could have accomplished on tour (off-time). She has the tour card for life and plays occasionally during the summer, although has no plans to return to the tour full time (permanent).
There were five out of six factors affecting G3’s perception of the transition, which according to Schlossberg’s model would make for a smooth transition (role change as gain; positive affect; internal source; gradual onset; and permanent duration). Only one of the six factors was leading toward a difficult transition (off-time). She felt as though there were accomplishments still to be made on the tour. G3 did not have institutional supports; she had social supports in her friends on the tour. Traveling kept her away from family for approximately 40 weeks of the year. The resources available to G3 outweighed the deficits.

G3 did not discuss adjustment difficulties after leaving sport. Her stress came while she was still full time on the tour. She felt burned out and took time away from golf. Discussions with friends prompted G3 to think about taking on the role of a golf coach. She continued to play on the tour, while contemplating a role change. She left high level competition after accepting a job offer to coach intercollegiate golf. The majority of G3’s adaptation to transition took place during the year before she formally left the LPGA tour.

Golfer 4

G4’s disengagement from sport was sudden due to accident (external; loss), while she was at the peak of her playing career (off-time). She experienced loss of self-esteem and self-worth issues (negatives). She remains desirous, yet unclear about and fearful, of returning (uncertainty).
All six of the factors affecting G4’s perception of the transition were indicative of a difficult transition (role change as loss; negative affect; external source; off-time; sudden onset; uncertain duration). According to Schlossberg (1981), the “greatest degree of stress and negative affect is connected with uncertainty” (p. 9). Moreover, G4 did not have institutional supports; she had social supports in her friends and family. Weighing the balance between resources and deficits, the deficit side was clearly overloaded.

G4 described an extremely difficult transition period filled with distress. She sought professional counseling to help her deal with the loss. Returning to practice golf was yet another means toward integrating her loss. She began deliberate practice to return to the tour three years post-accident. However, the uncertainty about whether she will be able to return to the professional tour continues to create difficulty and struggle.

Golfer 5

G5 expected to leave highly competitive golf at the end of her intercollegiate career (gradual; on-time; external). She viewed the opportunity to play golf and her future career plans as gains (positives). She had no plans to play at the next level (permanent).

Five out of six factors affected G5’s perception of the transition, which according to Schlossberg's model, would make for a smooth transition (role change as gain; positive affect; on-time; gradual onset; permanent duration).
According to Schlossberg’s model, only one of the six factors would lead toward a difficult transition (external source). G5 did not have institutional supports; she had social supports in her teammates and family. She was not interested in playing on the professional tour. The resources available to G5 outweighed the deficits.

G5 was the only participant to state that disengagement from sport was a natural progression. She had not envisioned playing golf professionally. She did express “missing” the team and college life; however, for G5, leaving highly competitive golf was a change for which she was prepared. G5’s transition reinforces the conclusions of Coakley (1983), Greendorfer and Blinde (1985), and McPherson (1984). Coakley (1983) and Greendorfer and Blinde (1985) concluded that leaving competitive sport might not be the traumatic event that previous retirement literature had portrayed. McPherson (1984) reported that “withdrawal from elite sport during or following high school or college probably represents a relatively normal transition from the educational setting to partial or full involvement in the labor force” (McPherson, 1984). G5’s process of transition might be thought of as “just another phase of life.”

Expired eligibility could be included in Taylor and Ogilvie’s (1994) conceptual model of athletic retirement since the end of eligibility represents yet another perspective from which to examine the antecedents and initiators of athletic retirement. G5 had the opportunity to “prepare” for her retirement in a
manner that the other participants did not. G5 knew when her final competition would take place; the other athletes did not have the same type of awareness of when their competition would cease.

Co-Essence Model of Sport (CEMS)

An examination of the participants' transitions from golf utilizing the perspective of the Co-Essence Model of Sport (Highlen, 1991; 1994), showed when all of the women (G1, G2, G3, G4) who played professionally began to take care of themselves, that is, look internally, listen to and trust themselves, they began to nurture their spirit and heal (cf. Highlen, 1991; 1992; 1994). G3 began to feel burned out, so she took time off. G4 realized she could not cope on her own, so she sought counseling. G1 reconnected with friends and alumni when she was feeling alone and isolated. G2 was drinking and “failing” to perform to expectations, so she took time off.

Tenet 1 relates that “all forms of life are unique” and “self-worth is inherent and independent of external, physical realities” (Myers, 1988; Myers, et al., 1991; as cited in Highlen, 1992, p.2). The changes these women experienced seemed to begin when they moved away from role engulfment and singularity in self-perception toward self-knowledge, and discovering and being “true” to themselves. In keeping with the Co-Essence Model, the participants initiated steps toward opening to their “essence” or soul. Acceptance of the
principle that “regardless of what we do or how we do it, we are worthwhile,” occurred in this process.

For instance, G2 described feeling “grounded” for the first time when she began the journey to become a PGA professional. G2 was “shattered” when she was no longer a “professional athlete.” Yet, when she started to open to other possibilities she began to feel rooted (cf. dynamic and magnetic forces; Highlen, 1994). G2 let go of the obsession of needing to be a “professional athlete” and the fear and need to control her environment. She began to take risks and explore new aspects of herself. “Self esteem is the key that enables us to be consistently loving to others, especially under adverse circumstances” (Highlen, 1992, p.5). Transformation can occur when the self critic is balanced with self esteem (Highlen, 1991; 1992; 1994).

Tenet 2 involves seeing the world from a “win-win” perspective and relates to the participants’ perceptions of winning (Highlen, 1991, 1992, 1994; Myers, 1988). The two women (G3, G5) who employed the “both/and” philosophy in their perception of winning experienced a smoother transition process than the three (G1, G2, G4) who looked at winning as “either/or.” Neither G3 nor G5 described her self-worth as dependent upon winning or being a highly competitive athlete. Self-worth for G3 and G5 seemed to be independent of external rewards and winning tournaments (cf. Myers, 1988; Myers, et al. 1991). For G3 and G5, winning was “improving” and “looking for
the positive.* G3 and G5 viewed discontinuation of participation in highly competitive golf as a gain and an opportunity to face new challenges. Their perceptions of their transitions represent additional instances of "both/and" thinking.

The "either/or" philosophy is linked to perfectionism (Highlen, 1992). Mistakes are failures, and not winning is failing, according to "either/or" thinking. G1, G2, and G4 provided indicators of their "either/or" thinking. G1 experienced changes in self-perception, when she acknowledged that perfectionism was not what she wanted in her life. She stopped comparing herself to others and judging others; it was okay for her and for others to make mistakes. G1 was beginning to let go of "either/or" thinking.

G2’s "either/or" thinking was related to perfectionism as well. G2 had greater and greater expectations for herself, which created pressure to perform. She expected to win golf tournaments; anything less than first place was unacceptable. Not meeting those expectations started a downward spiral with more expectations and more pressure. If G2 did not win, she was a failure.

G4 related a similar description of "either/or" reasoning. G4 perceived she was a good person, when she was playing well. G4 clearly illustrated that perception when she stated, "... you are how you play. If you shoot 68 you are great; if you shoot 78, you are a heel for the day.*
As Thomas and Ermler (1988) indicated, “When one's self-worth is contingent on success in a particular sport, such narrowness creates a vulnerability that is inevitable with declines in and/or termination of one's performance” (p. 139). Both G2 and G4 experienced “vulnerability” with the decline (G2) and/or the termination (G2, G4) of their athletic careers.

Tenet 3 relates that “[t]he highest value is in positive interpersonal relationships among people, not in material things or accomplishments” (Myers, 1988; Myers, et al., 1991, in Highlen, 1992, p. 3). G4 illustrated this tenet beautifully:

... belief in family and how important family is and that family is, at least to me, more important than anything I have ever had or ever will have. I could have all the money in the world and all the fame and it wouldn't come close to what I have in [my children] and my husband. I think my accident probably really, really put things into perspective for me... what was really important.... that I could have everything in the world, but if I didn't have my family. ... G4 realized that her essence (core) was not as a professional golfer and winning professional golf tournaments; rather, she was part of those around her.

G5 spoke of the camaraderie of the team and missing college life. “I miss college life. ... Just being around people your own age all the time. It's fun.” G5 missed the interpersonal relationships more than the competition. “I always wanted to get married, and I'd like to have a family and that's hard to do when you are on the tour.” Developing and maintaining relationships with friends and
family was very important to G5, and she did not perceive being a member of the professional tour and having strong interpersonal relationships as compatible.

The impetus for G3 beginning to explore leaving competitive golf was missing the opportunity to maintain meaningful relationships. She wanted to stay in one place for awhile and be with friends and family. Relating with others became more important than performing on the golf course.

"I just felt like I wanted to stop traveling so much. . . . I was gone about 40 weeks out of the year. . . . I just did not want to leave home. I was still practicing but it was not as fun for me anymore."

Retirement as a Negative Event

Several authors (Hill & Lowe, 1974; McPherson, 1980; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; 1986; Rosenberg, 1981; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982) have used terms such as "sport termination trauma," "existential dilemmas," "identity crises," "social death," and "problem settings" in their presentations of male athletes' disengagement from highly competitive sport. Two of the women in this study described their transition as "earth-shattering," or "dramatic" and indicated they did not feel "a lot of self-worth." G2 and G4 both experienced self-image altering transitions from sport. The participants did not describe "sport termination trauma," "existential dilemmas," and "social deaths." The time span since retirement may have influenced their perceptions, as the range for all participants was 2 to 13 years post-retirement.
None of the five women depicted their transitions as a progression through predictable stages as Ogilvie and Howe (1986) proposed. Neither G1 nor G4, who suffered health problems, described her transition as a progression of negativity and passivity: shock and numbness, denial, anger and resentment, depression and unresolved feelings (Ogilvie & Howe, 1986). G4's experiences are more consistent with the positive, dynamic model proposed by Tunick et al. (1991). G4 spoke of being shocked by her injury (shock); she was keenly aware of what happened to her (realization) and deeply saddened by her loss (mourning). She acknowledged the effects of the accident (acknowledgment) and is working to return to the tour (coping/reformulation). G4 took an active role in her recovery; she was not a passive bystander.

All of the women described "negative sensations" or stress of some sort (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). G5 talked about "missing" her college teammates and the camaraderie she experienced. She missed those experiences more than the competition itself. Both G1 and G4 experienced many challenges subsequent to their health problems. For instance, G1 was treated as though her injury was psychosomatic.

G1 experienced loneliness and isolation while leaving intercollegiate competition and the mini tour. Those feelings might be attributed to the "closed environment" of athletics (Ferrante & Etzel, 1991; Sperber 1990). The athletic department was a "self-perpetuating system" that was difficult for outsiders to
enter and difficult for athletes to move outside to tap resources (Ferrante & Etzel, 1991). Athletes, often times, are unaware of resources outside of the athletic department because they are protected and supported by that system (Ferrante & Etzel, 1991). The athletes eat, study, travel, practice and receive tutoring together, rather than socialize with other students.

As researchers proposed, all of the participants felt some disruption and negative feelings during the process of leaving competitive sport (Coakley, 1983; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; 1986; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). These disruptions ranged from feelings of isolation and loneliness, to financial struggles, to missing friends/teammates, to coping with alcohol dependency. Nonetheless, all of the women, at the time of the interviews, believed themselves to be “adjusted” to or accepting of the positions they were in. Adjustment or adaptation came in many forms. Friends and family provided support systems for four of the women either immediately upon leaving sport (G2, G4) or prior to leaving (G3, G5). One of the participants reported seeking psychological counseling to adjust to her transition. Four of the women (G1, G2, G3, G5) continued their careers in golf because of their love of sport; not because they did not believe themselves to have other options. One of the women was an active participant in her transition from the very beginning (G5), while others seemed to have had serendipitous experiences that influenced their start of their transition path (G1, an accident; G2, unexpected
job offer; G3, conversation with a friend; G4, an accident). G4 indicated she was “sad” about her accident, but was adapting and reformulating her life and discovering what role professional golf might play.

The women’s experiences in leaving highly competitive golf were indicative of a dynamic process (cf. Gordon, 1988). “Crisis through role loss [did] not have to result in deterioration of personal identity” (p. 7). On the contrary, role loss provided the impetus to change self conceptions, thus resulting in personal growth. For instance, G2 experienced personal growth by way of the realization that her life could be multidimensional; she was more than a professional golfer. The participants’ personal identities did not deteriorate; rather the change in self conception provided opportunities for personal growth.

**Gerontological Approaches to Retirement**

Baillie and Danish (1992) stated that disengagement theory and activity theory provided little insight into understanding athletic retirement because athletes rarely “mutually withdraw” (disengagement theory) and duplicating the activity level of highly competitive sport is “nearly impossible” (activity theory). None of the participants mutually withdrew from competitive golf. All of them, would have preferred to continue to play and be successful. In addition, none of the women maintained a comparable activity level after leaving golf.

Social breakdown theory (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973) noted that retirement can bring a cyclical process of negative labeling and social
withdrawal. G2 experienced a parallel process prior to leaving the tour. She was not performing as expected and, as she placed more and more pressure on herself to perform, she withdrew through drinking. Leaving sport actually helped her to identify other positive aspects of herself and resulted in personal growth.

**Athletic Retirement as Social Death**

As Lerch (1984) and Rosenberg (1984) noted, when athletes lose their place in sport, they may suffer a social death, not a biological death. None of the participants indicated being treated as if they were dead after they left sport. The women did not describe being ostracized by anyone or any particular group. This result could be due to the length of time the participants had been away from high level competition. Possibly the "social death" phenomenon is experienced upon leaving rather than 2 or more years into retirement.

**Positive Aspects of Retirement**

Some researchers have suggested that there is little evidence to suggest that athletes face adjustment difficulties in retirement (Allison & Meyer, 1988; Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Coakley, 1983; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Synder & Baber, 1979). These studies were limited to intercollegiate male athletes with the exception of the Greendorfer and Blinde (1985) and Allison and Meyer (1988) studies. G5 was an intercollegiate athlete that seemingly did not experience any identity issues with adapting to leaving highly competitive sport.
The one study which examined female professional athletes' retirement experiences noted that over half of the women experienced relief upon retirement (Allison & Meyer, 1988). Retirement from sport did bring "unexpected" relief to all four of the participants who competed at the professional level. G1, G2, G3, and G4 noted some form of relief when their days of highly competitive sport were complete. Relief included new opportunities for personal growth, some degree of "normalcy" in everyday experiences (G4), no more "pressure" to constantly perform at peak (G1, G2), and time to be with friends and family (G1, G3, G4).

Findings from this study were similar to those noted by Allison & Meyer (1988), who concluded that retirement from sport was not especially traumatic for women professional tennis players. Antecedents to retirement for three of the four retired golfers (G1, G3, G4) were similar to former professional tennis players (20 women) studied by Allison and Meyer (1988). Allison and Meyer (1988) noted the following reasons for leaving competitive tennis: dislike of travel and desire to establish and maintain relationships (G1, G3), frustration and burnout (G3), and injury/health (G1, G4).

Some literature suggested that the retirement experience may actually be pleasantly anticipated (Coakley, 1983; McPherson, 1984); and one study, which included intercollegiate female athletes, also suggested that retirement might be pleasantly anticipated. G5, the only participant whose highest level of
competition was intercollegiate golf, was closest to “pleasantly” anticipating her disengagement from sport. G5 was the only participant who knew when her last competition would be; consequently, she was able to plan to leave competitive sport.

For the other four women (G1, G2, G3, G4), leaving sport was a combination of frustrations and surprises. These four were going along the path of continued participation when something got in their way. G1 was pursuing her dream of becoming a member of the professional tour, when she had an accident and was unable to compete for the majority of her senior year in college. She attempted the professional tour, playing in four mini tour events, but decided against the lifestyle. G1 realized she did not enjoy traveling; rather, she wanted to feel grounded in one location. G2 was participating on the mini and European professional tours, and upon entering the qualifying school for the LPGA tour was shocked by the performance that earned her a “Do Not Show” (DNS) for the next day. G3 was playing on the LPGA tour and was beginning to feel “burned out,” was not actively seeking employment, when she was offered a coaching position. She had an option to turn to immediately upon leaving the LPGA tour. G4 was beginning to play some of the best golf she had ever played on the LPGA tour when she had an accident.

One very clear difference between these four participants and G5 was their goals and desires to be professional athletes. G1, G2, G3, and G4 planned
their careers to become professional golfers. G5 did not aspire to that level of competition. She felt she did not possess the “drive” and commitment necessary to reach the next level. Likewise, she did not perceive her goal of having a family as possible to integrate with the next level. Consequently, G5 planned a different career for herself. Accordingly, the transition experiences of these women would be expected to differ. Four of the women were leaving their life goals, what they thought would be their careers, and the timing was socially “off.” Society expected them to play many more years, as they, too, anticipated playing many more years. The other participant was beginning her career in recreation education. As indicated throughout the existing athletic retirement literature, leaving something which has been such an integral part of one’s life, there was bound to be some intense thoughts and feelings (Werthner & Orlick, 1982).

Another distinction between G5 and the other four participants relates to career choice. For G1, G2, G3, and G4, professional golf was (or was expected to be for G1) their career. They had planned many years of their lives toward making their living and supporting themselves playing professional golf. For G5 intercollegiate golf was part of her educational experience. She planned her college major around making a living and supporting herself.

G5 was similar to G3 (both of whom perceived transition as a gain) in that both of them had an option to focus on before they formally retired. G3 was
offered a coaching position and G5 was offered a position as a teaching professional. These perceptions reinforced the conclusions of research that indicated athletes who have options to concentrate on after retirement (e.g., employment, interests, or relationships) are better prepared to negotiate a smooth transition than those who have no options or interests at all (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Werthner & Orlick, 1986).

**Resources**

G5 was the only one of the participants who had a clear idea of what she wanted to pursue upon completion of competition. The other four likely could have benefited from either pre-retirement or post-retirement resources (cf. Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Petitpas & Champagne, 1988). Pre-retirement planning could be employed to enhance an athlete’s self-identity, diversify his or her social identity, and discuss financial planning and money management (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). For instance, appropriate resources and the lack of negative influences (i.e., institutional assistance, social supports, medical and psychological care) may have enabled G1 to experience a less stressful transition. She may have been better able to understand and cope with her injury, the isolation she felt, as well as obtain a clear diagnosis and treatment of her injury. G2 could have benefited from both pre- and post-retirement institutional assistance and career counseling to help her identify skills and abilities in and out of sport. Likewise, G3 could have benefited from workshops
and programs sponsored by the sport organization to help her identify strengths and weaknesses, interests and abilities related to beginning a second career. G4 eventually accessed counseling on her own; however, she could have benefited from interventions from the LPGA to help her adjust to the sudden, forced-exit from competition.

Many athletes aspire to the next level; yet, few actually succeed (less than 1%; Coakley, 1990). Inevitably, careers in highly competitive sport end. Given that this seems to be common knowledge, why are there few, if any, formal resources available to assist athletes with the end of the athletic career?

Group counseling with seniors, fifth year athletes, injured or medical red shirts, professional and elite athletes approaching the end of their athletic career could be initiated to discuss transition and effective coping strategies. Ideally, such information and opportunities for self-discovery and growth could be available for all athletes, not just those nearing the end of their highly competitive experience. Such groups might include “former” athletes speaking about their experiences of leaving sport, including the strategies and behaviors they utilized, social supports employed, and emotions experienced and how to cope with those feelings. Such a group setting should examine sources of assistance that were not utilized, but, in retrospect, could have provided needed assistance.
Workshops led by career counselors, sport psychologists, and other experts could be developed to assist athletes with uncovering and highlighting their transferable skills. Programs could be developed for significant others (friends, family, and coaches) to increase their awareness and knowledge of the process of leaving highly competitive sport and how they might facilitate a smooth transition. If social supports are not close in proximity, peer mentoring programs could be utilized. Athletes and nonathletes with similar interests/backgrounds/hobbies could be paired to combat the "closed environment."

"In sport, it appears that most organizations have not paid the same attention to helping athletes move out of the organizational structure as they have in helping them move in" (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993, p. 148). Development of programs and resources to assist all athletes with adaptation to transition from sport would be to include training in verbal skills, critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, and social interaction skills (Thomas & Ermler, 1988). Thomas and Ermler (1988) stressed the development of human resources rather than only athletic excellence.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The intention of this research was to explore the transition experiences of women from many different sports. Given the lack of response from the target population, this goal was not attained. Theoretical sampling, in this instance, did
not lend to heterogeneity along this variable. Likewise, it was anticipated that participants would come from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. Traditionally, ethnic minorities have not been represented in golf. As snowball sampling led to women golfers, racial/ethnic diversity was lost. Clearly, the absence of diversity in sport types and race/ethnicity limited this research, as those voices are missing.

Although G5 provided a "negative case" for analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the study would have benefited from interviewing more women who had experienced a transition from highly competitive sport, particularly cohorts of G5. G1, G2, G3 and G4 were all of the same age group. Likewise, additional interviews would have afforded the opportunity to explore the nature with which G5 left highly competitive sport. Was G5 an aberration in the process of exiting from high level competition or was she merely one of many female, college athletes who plan for their careers outside of sport (cf. Meyer, 1990)? What effect did the difference in cohorts (G1, G2, G3, G4 vs. G5) have on the findings? What was the impact of Title IX and more women participating in sport on the transition process of G5?

The theme of "pleasantly anticipating transition" was not fully explored. Likewise, the similarities and differences between those who sought a career (G1, G2, G3, G4) in professional golf versus the one athlete (G5) who did not
were not fully explored. These insightful differences emerged as a result of G5's interview, and certainly present implications for future research.

The combination of intercollegiate (G5) and professional athletes (G1, G2, G3, G4) with varied levels of competition (mini tour, mini and European tours, and LPGA tour) could have involved too much heterogeneity. Future studies might focus on the same cohort and the same level of competition (collegiate or professional), rather than a mix of both variables, or interview a greater number of each level of competition.

Future research would be wise to address the limitations mentioned. For example, such research should include a variety of women's sports. This examination of golfers' transitions from highly competitive sport was limited to individual sport. Women's team sport transition experiences should be explored as well.

Studies might also examine sports by participation level so as to compare and contrast intercollegiate with professional or other high performance athletes (Olympic athletes), as there are currently only two "professional" sports for women in the United States (tennis and golf). Additional exploration of the similarities and differences between professional and intercollegiate athletes is necessary to clarify whether or not experiences such as G5's are typical for intercollegiate athletes.
To examine athletic retirement from a life-span developmental perspective would require in-depth, longitudinal, ethnographic studies. This method would enable the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the importance of athletic participation across the life-span, not just at any one point in time. Such a study would also alleviate some of the retrospective nature of the inquiry. Studies could begin with young athletes and periodically follow them through their athletic participation to ascertain levels of commitment to the athletic role, career aspirations, social support systems (formal and informal), and educational/occupational preparation for career.

Future research could combine qualitative and quantitative measures to assess perceptions of athletic retirement. Interviews of former athletes could be tape recorded, transcribed and analyzed. In combination with this qualitative measure, role salience could be inventoried. The Salience Inventory could be revised and tested with athletes to determine the importance they attach to athletics and the components Super and Nevill (1986) assessed: study, work, homemaking, leisure, and community service.

Future research would do well to follow the advice of the participants and look at developing and implementing programs to assist athletes with the inevitable end of their career. Athletic departments and professional athletic associations might consider creating groups of athletes and former athletes to discuss what comes next in their lives and that competing at such a high level
will not last forever. What will follow the athletes' highly competitive days in sport?

Concluding Remarks

Whichever perspective or theory was employed to examine the data, difficulties, frustrations, and stress were noted. Relief, recovery, growth, and adaptation were found as well. It is possible there are as many ways to leave sport as there are people who will eventually leave it. Each individual perceives things differently, and accordingly, adjusts differently. Each transition has the potential to be a crisis, a relief, or a combination of both, depending upon the person's perception of the situation (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). There were aspects of positive and negative affect with each participant's transition. There was a different behavioral pattern for each participant's transition. Each of the participant's endured a different process of adjustment and adaptation to leaving highly competitive sport. Leaving was not something that occurred overnight; the frustrations and joys that accompanied the process of retiring were not there and gone. Retirement was not a one day event. Retirement was a process that took varied amounts of time and utilized a variety of resources.

Each of the participants in this study made the adjustment from highly competitive athlete to former highly competitive athlete in varying amounts of time with varying degrees of ease and smoothness. Nonetheless, there seemed to be some patterns indicative of a smooth transition as opposed to a difficult
one: role change thought of as a gain; winning perceived from a "both/and" perspective; self-worth not attached to performance; and options, interests and social supports perceived as available (Coakley, 1983; Hearle, 1975; Highlen, 1991, 1994; Hill & Lowe, 1974; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Schlossberg, 1981; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Thomas & Ermier, 1988).

Additional research could be conducted to replicate this study so as to add to its credibility and further illuminate the properties and dimensions of transitions from sport and the smooth versus difficult process of leaving competitive sport.
LIST OF REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

LETTER TO COACHES
Dear Name:

I am writing to seek your assistance in contacting a few of your former athletes. For your information, I am in the process of finishing a doctorate degree which combines Health, Physical Education and Recreation with Counseling Psychology (Interdisciplinary Studies in Sport Psychology). Presently, I am completing my dissertation which explores female athletes' transition or disengagement from highly competitive sport. My study is a qualitative one in which I plan to meet with former athletes to discuss their transition from competitive sport. Please be assured that the athletes' confidentiality will be maintained.

I would appreciate your assistance with locating a few former Ohio State SPORT (players) who are no longer competing on such a high level. At this time, I welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you, or if you prefer, you can provide a list of names and addresses and I will contact these women via a letter. I can be reached at the locations and/or phone numbers that follow.

I appreciate your cooperation and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Missler, M.A., M.R.C.

work:  
Address  
Number  

home:  
Address  
Number
APPENDIX B

SCRIPT
Script

I am going to ask you a variety of questions concerning attitudes, thoughts, and feelings surrounding your retirement from intercollegiate/professional/Olympic sport. Feel free to expound in any way you desire to the questions asked.

Please be assured that your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. If you agree, I would like to audiotape our conversation so that neither of us will be distracted during the interview by indepth note-taking. At the completion of the study the tapes will be erased. You can be assured that your name will not be associated with your responses; in other words, your confidentiality will be maintained.
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM
I consent to participating in (or my child's participation in) research entitled:

Female Athletes' Transition from Sport: A Naturalistic Inquiry

Pamela S. Highlen, Ph.D. or his/her authorized representative has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my (my child's) participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am (my child is) free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me (my child).

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: ___________________ Signed: ___________________ (Participant)

Signed: ___________________ (Principal Investigator or his/her Authorized Representative)

Signed: ___________________ (Person Authorized to Consent for Participant - If required)

Witness: ____________________

HS-027 (Rev. 3/87) -- To be used only in connection with social and behavioral research.
SUMMARY SHEET

This summary sheet will be used to provide general information (demographic data) about you that may not be fully covered in the interview.

Please respond to the following. All responses will be confidential.

Age __________
Racial/Ethnic Background __________
Disability Status __________
Religious Affiliation __________
Sexual Orientation __________
Professional Training/Education (number of years & location) __________

Occupation & Community Involvement __________

Relationship Status (i.e., single, partnered, married, divorced, separated, etc.)

Childhood Background (i.e., socioeconomic status and number/place in family)

Other Information
Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Why did you select ...... (university)?

Tell me a little bit about your sport...  
what you did play...  
your perceptions of your sport....

Tell me about your transition from high school sport to collegiate sport....

When you think of the word “sport” ... what comes to mind?

Tell me about your role models in sport... the people you admired....

Describe the circumstances that eventually led to your retirement from ..........?

Can you tell me why you decided to leave competitive sport when you did?

Did you want to leave when you did?

What was your physical condition?

How did you view your retirement?
    Did you view the change as a gain, a loss or both?
    Did you feel positive, negative or both about the change?

Would you describe the retirement as gradual or sudden?

Do you consider the retirement permanent?

Was the retirement stressful?  if so, describe....
How did you prepare for your retirement?

Did anything occur during this process that you did not expect?

Talk about the resources available or not available to you during this process....

What formal/institutional resources were (not) available? (presence — effectiveness)

What informal (family/friends) resources were (not) available? (presence — effectiveness)

How important (not important) were (are) these resources to your retirement?

When did you know you were going to play professionally?

During your collegiate career, what types of educational preparation did you take to assist you with the transition from competitive sport?

- courses/instructors
- counselors
- others
- coaches

Describe some things you believe you learned from athletics...Do you think you could have only learned these things through athletics?

Tell me about the importance of sport in your life ... What about now?
Tell me about the importance of education in your life.... What about now?

Do you believe athletes have a certain image to uphold/present? If so, describe? Did/do you believe yourself to fit this image?

What constitutes winning?? now and then???

Do you ever think about specific moments in your athletic career, like a specific play or game? What are your thoughts about that (those) instance(s)?

What are the most important beliefs you have about yourself at the present and how do they compare with your beliefs before you left competitive sport?

How does being a female influence your thoughts, perceptions, and experiences as an athlete (or any realm for that matter)?

What about your post-career sports involvement... what are you doing now with regard to your sport participation?

What advice would you offer to young athletes???

What advice would you offer athletes considering retirement???

Is there anything you would like to add...???
As I continue the work on my dissertation, "Female Athletes' Transitions from Highly Competitive Sport: A Naturalistic Inquiry," I have reached a stage where your advice and insights are needed. Enclosed please note the typed copy of your audiotape interview.

At this time, your expertise as a co-researcher is vital to establishing the validity of the research. Please review the transcript for the accuracy of your comments (there may be some typing errors). There may be some instances where you feel the need to add to your original thoughts; please feel free to add to your responses in any way. Likewise, you may delete some comments if you believe there are any misrepresentations. Please make any changes directly on the document.

A stamped, return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. It would be most beneficial if you would return the transcription within the next two weeks.

Thanks again for your participation!

Sincerely,

Susan M. Missler
APPENDIX G

MEMBER CHECK LETTER - RESULTS
Dear

I am sorry to bother you at such a busy time, but I would appreciate your assistance one more time with my dissertation.

Enclosed please note the chapter of my dissertation which describes the results of the study. At this time, I need your help with the "trustworthiness" of my study. The study is thought to be credible if the participants can identify themselves and recognize discussions to be consistent with their beliefs. Please read the presentation and let me know what you think. Rest assured that I, in no way, want to misrepresent our discussion, so please let me know if you disagree with any notations or have any concerns about what is written.

In addition, please note that everyone was given a number to maintain her confidentiality. I would prefer everyone have a pseudonym, but I would like each participant to select her own "alias." However, if I do not hear from everyone concerning selecting an alias, I will leave the document with numbers.

I would greatly appreciate hearing from you at your earliest convenience. Please feel free to call me at (614) (work) or (614) (home, answering machine) to let me know what you think, both positive or negative, and what "pen name" you would like to select.

Again, I truly appreciate your assistance and I value your voice! This experience has been an opportunity that I would not trade. Thank you for sharing your voice.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Missler