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Mark Robert Worrell Jr.

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**The Dissertation Committee for Mark Robert Worrell Jr. Certifies that this
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**Former Major League Baseball (MLB) Players
and Athletic Identity**

Committee:

Darla M. Castelli, Supervisor

Louis Harrison Jr., Co-Supervisor

Xiaofen Keating

Ramon Antonio Martinez

**Former Major League Baseball (MLB) Players
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by

Mark Robert Worrell Jr., B.A.; M.B.A.

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Former Major League Baseball (MLB) Players and Athletic Identity

Mark Robert Worrell, Jr., Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Darla M. Castelli
Co-Supervisor: Louis Harrison, Jr.

At the height of their professional careers, Major League Baseball (MLB) players are considered the best in the world at their sport. For these men, athletic identity is the dominating force in their lives, yet all MLB players must eventually retire from the sport that has defined their lives for so long. Transition into retirement is difficult for players who have never considered a life without playing baseball. The purpose of this research was to examine perceptions of athletic identity among former MLB players and to gain insight into both the positive and negative aspects of their transition into retirement. The literature review examined theories in identity studies and a concurrent mixed-methods approach was used to collect and analyze data from members of the Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association (MLBPAA). A sample of 194 participants completed an online survey based on the Third Version of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale Plus (AIMS-Plus), which also included

additional demographic and open-ended questions to determine the participant's age, the number of years of service in the MLB, level of education, income, marriage status, if they still have injuries related to their MLB career, if they still consider themselves baseball players, and if they secured employment after their retirement. Ten "high identity loss" participants, and ten chosen "low identity loss" participants were selected for in-depth interviews. Analysis of the survey and coded interviews revealed that MLB players experience sudden identity foreclosure and identity loss upon retirement; former players have strong crossover qualities that carry over into their careers after retirement; the timing of and years in retirement has an effect on perception of identity; and former players can adapt to reconstruct their identities around other important aspects of their lives such as family and new career opportunities. The implications of the study suggest that maintaining a connection to baseball and acknowledging crossover qualities early in their career can help athletes transition more smoothly into retirement. Further, maintaining strong relationships with family and considering career planning early in their MLB careers could help players cope with identity loss during retirement.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Professional Athletes, Retirement, and Life Without Baseball

Our society loves professional sports, but public perceptions of retiring athletes are equivocal, as some leave the game as heroes while countless others simply disappear from the roster with little fanfare. Observable benefits, such as lucrative salaries, retirement at a young age, and notoriety make it unthinkable that professionals might struggle with issues like depression or anxiety as they transition away from the game they love. Media images suggest that professional athletes have what we all desire in physical stature, satisfaction with achievement, and access to desirable possessions. Saddled with injuries and unknown plans for their future, because often they do not leave the game on their terms, professional athletes face many challenges when transitioning from their professional lives to retirement (Lally, 2007). Only recently have such difficulties come to the forefront.

In Major League Baseball (MLB), the majority of the athletes have played baseball since early childhood. A life without playing baseball, something that many of these retiring athletes are forced to encounter for the first time, can be challenging to understand, much less navigate. In this dissertation, the researcher seeks to understand the perceptions of identity among retiring MLB players as they transition from their baseball careers into the next phase of their lives. While of particular relevance to MLB players, this topic touches upon the human condition as a whole. For example, if the things that many of us envision

would make us happy (i.e., fame, fortune, doing a job we enjoy) do not guarantee contentment for a lifetime, a former player is forced to ask himself what does? The notion of identity is centered on the questions: a) Who am I?, and b) What is my purpose? Given the magnitude of retirement, an individual asking such questions while transitioning out of MLB seems to be an inherent part of the process. With the uncertainty of the future, retiring MLB players must face life after a post-baseball reality as they seek to discover their place in the world.

The Significance of Athletic Identity

Defining and understanding the concept of identity has been a topic of intrigue in the Western world at least since the advent of studies in psychology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Paranjpe, 2006). It has only been in relatively recent decades that specific domains of identity development have been explored with one of those domains being athletic identity. The extent by which a person identifies with an athletic role, which is how extensively the role of “athlete” plays in how an individual perceives of his or her identity, is termed “athletic identity” (Brewer et al.,1993). While many people might relate to sport at some level, athletic identity can be measured according to the strength, importance and exclusivity one assigns to his or her psychological identity as the athlete role is nourished and sustained by one’s relationships and environment (Cieslak, 2004).

Athletic identity is a relatively unique concept, particularly as it applies to professional athletes because it takes hold at a very young age (Webb et al.,

1998) and grows stronger as one experiences more success in his or her sport (Carswell, 2008). Because baseball is a team and not an individual sport, this may also influence how one's identity is conceptualized in relationship to others as being a team player. Being part of a team affects social identity, which is nurtured through career advancement. In MLB there is a distinct trajectory from amateur to professional development to the Big Leagues, and this progression in status also has an effect on the identity of the athlete (Anderson, 2012). Professional athletes are more likely to identify with the athlete role and place this role near the top of their hierarchy of defining self-concepts because of the experiences associated with transitioning from amateur to professional status (Cieslak, 2004; Curry & Weaner, 1987) given such unique factors that accompany this elevation to professional status. Additionally, due to the magnitude that athletic identity has on professional athletes, transitions out of the sport due either to injury or retirement can be a traumatic experience placing the individual at risk for depression or other emotional distresses (Gordon & Lavelle, 2001; Blinde & Strata, 1992; Webb et al., 1998).

Athletic Identity of Retiring MLB Players

To date, no known study has sought to address how identities are perceived or the strength of athletic identity amongst MLB players at the conclusion of players' careers. Athletic identity might have a stronger hold on MLB players than other professional athletes. The reasons for a more substantial identity, among MLB over other professional sports, might be career longevity,

longer seasons containing more games, and a differential league structure. Unlike the National Football League (NFL) or National Basketball Association (NBA), MLB is allowed to draft baseball players directly from high school, thus allowing the young athlete to bypass the college experience, which ultimately produces fewer MLB players that have college degrees. Early entry into professional baseball may minimize the proximal experiences that also contribute to identity formation. Additionally, one unintended consequence is that MLB players may face greater challenges finding work after retirement. An alternative option for a former MLB to remain connected in some sense to the sport by coaching, managing or scouting in MLB's extensive minor league system. Even staying connected to the sport by coaching youth baseball might alleviate some of the distress experienced by former MLB players in unique ways when compared to other sports (Grove et al., 1998). This research is important because it could help current and former MLB players who may experience identity loss at the conclusion of their professional baseball career. As such, the primary purpose of this study is to examine how former MLB players perceive athletic identity. The secondary aim of this dissertation was to determine how former MLB players describe their athletic identity after discontinuation. The conceptual framework of this study provides a historical representation of how athletic identity theory was conceptualized and then applied to this present study.

Study Design

This research study examined the athletic identity among former MLB players. The review of literature justifying the study is divided into multiple parts, with the first part addressing the role of self in the perception of identity and emergence of athletic identity as a general concept as well as how the athletic identity theory emerged through the pre-modern through the modern eras. The second part of the chapter reviews the literature related to identity, with a particular focus on studies related to athletic identity and other domains of identity that impact it. The third part of the chapter provides a brief overview of the relevant conclusions drawn from the literature and surveys the gap in the literature that this dissertation will address regarding MLB players. Categories related to identity loss and transitions away from the professional sport will also be examined according to the extant literature. Finally, the chapter ends with a review of how athletic identity relates to retiring professional athletes and sets the stage for evaluating the impact of the above upon retiring MLB players.

The methodologies that will be utilized in this mixed-methods study are also detailed in this document. Using a valid and reliable survey, former MLB players were segmented into classifications of high and low identity loss, and then a subsample of each classification was interviewed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of human identity has been around since the dawning of Western intellectual thought. Original questions such as, “Is there a God?” and, “Where did we come from?” have given way to the more identity-based inquiry of, “Who am I?” (Lawhead, 2014). The literature review section of the dissertation will examine the research that has contributed to our modern concept of human identity today. It will also focus on the domains of identity study that are most relevant to the topic of professional athlete identity and the perceived changes to that identity as one’s role and status changes within the sport.

While little research has explored athletic identity as it relates to MLB, the relevant literature related to identity studies, athletic identity, and identity loss will serve as the theoretical frame guiding the design of this study. For these purposes, this literature review will introduce the history of identity studies from the beginnings of such thought in Western civilization until the present day. Next, a review of the research regarding identity theory through the lens of contemporary scholars will be provided. This literature review will also examine specific domains of identity study such as ego identity, social identity, ethnic identity, work-related identity, and others relevant to the purposes of this dissertation. After reviewing the other related domains of identity influence, the primary category that this dissertation seeks to explore, athletic identity, will be studied according to the extant literature. Finally, questions about identity loss

generally, and relevant loss experienced by former athletes individually, will be considered.

Historical and Philosophical Models of Personal Identity in Relation to the Athlete's Identity

While a full evaluation regarding the historical development of human identity is not possible and beyond the scope of this dissertation, understanding the ideological landscape upon which later psychological evaluations of personal identity were developed is essential to set the stage for further developments. It cannot be taken for granted that humanity has always understood the concept of personal identity, much less how identity is or is not developed during an individual's life. To understand presuppositions, including the reasons for those assumptions, a short overview of pre-modern thinkers in regards to identity will be immensely helpful. Much of the modern identity literature can only be fully understood in light of how scholarly thinking related to identity has evolved in Western thinking.

The dualism between body and soul initially emerged from Plato, and later modified by Aristotle, eventually developed with various alterations in the Western Christian tradition through the medieval era until the birth of modernity (Lawhead, 2014). For the ancient and medieval man, these divided anthropological perspectives were more than a mere academic interest, as such conceptions play a role in defining one's responsibility to self, others, and

society as a whole (Paranjpe, 2006). In these pre-modern perspectives, personal identity was something that one sought to discover, rather than something that developed throughout the course of life. Much of this assumption was carried on into the thought of early modernity, resulting in many later scholars to assume that one's identity is fixed from birth.

A review of the philosophical evolution of the concept of identity from being a fixed aspect of the soul that must be discovered to a more fluid aspect of the self that can be altered, developed, and changed, demonstrates the importance of self-identity in the modern world. Further, this modern perspective includes how this sense of identity impacts and influences the life of an individual. René Descartes (2002), often called the father of modernity, differentiated between the material body and the soul, positing that while the body is ever-changing, the immaterial soul is constant. Identifying the immaterial soul as the source of human identity, Descartes advanced the notion that one's identity is something that is both unchanging and unchangeable and can only be discovered rather than developed. While this concept of a fixed identity took precedent, Descartes' unique contribution came with his concept of an individual's mind, which he viewed as an immaterial component of a person, capable of self-reflection, and therefore self-discovery (Lawhead, 2014). Descartes' model of the self allows for the mind to discover aspects of its identity through the introspection and self-reflection of thought, hence the relevance of his famous quote, "I think, therefore I am;" however, his revelation that we exist as a result of our ability to think as

sentient beings, nonetheless does not give credence to the notion that we become whom we are based on the shaping of our identities as individuals. Though Descartes presented a revolutionary proposition that we exist based on our ability to consider our existence (or think and reflect on our existence), the question remained as to whether our identity was a pre-determined, unalterable aspect of our soul or self. However, it was not long before other scholars began to question how much of an individual's identity is truly predetermined, and as a result, the postmodern concept of identity began to emerge.

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Locke, 2002), John Locke countered the Cartesian notion that the immaterial soul is the locus of personal identity, positing that man is born with an empty mind, a *tabula rasa*, that takes form and shapes man's evolving identity according to experience, sensations, and reflections throughout the course of life (Nimbalkar, 2011). Essentially, Locke argues that the mind is subject to the influence of the individual's environment and the person's response to personal experiences. Using Locke's model demonstrates how a person's experience as a professional athlete might affect their identity as the physical and psychological experiences as an athlete imprints and shapes the mind of any individual in that role. Even though his theories remain popular, Locke's unique conceptions of identity were not universally accepted.

Contrary to Locke, David Hume rejected the notion of personal identity entirely, suggesting that people do not exist in any essential way, but that human

beings exist as only a collection or series of *impressions* upon the senses that give us the illusion of identity (Hume, 1748; Lawhead, 2014). Hume's reliance on material experiences of the senses as the basis for our impressions or sense of self is described as skeptical empiricism, a notion that a certain degree of knowledge or understanding can be perceived by the senses while the absolute truth remains elusive. Though Hume's theory eliminates the concept of personal identity, his speculation that our impressions give us the illusion of identity still lends credence to the idea that experiences as both an athlete and a professional would at least have an effect on a person's perception of their identity. Based on Hume's theory, the reality of whether or not the identity is illusory is irrelevant; a person's experiences and impressions would nonetheless contribute to their sense of self. An athlete's experiences would have an impact on their perception of whom they are as an individual purely based on their sensory perceptions. Hume's emphasis on the physical senses places more significance on the experiences of the material experience, whereas later philosophers such as Immanuel Kant illustrate the importance that rational thought plays an important part in the development of individual identity.

Immanuel Kant rejected Hume's skeptical empiricism by recognizing that purely rational thought is possible before and apart from the senses (Lawhead, 2014). In other words, just because impressions exist and it is *possible* to doubt the existence of an essential self, it does not follow that one should question the existence of the self when the rational mind testifies to its existence. Kant stated

that certain things could be known as *a priori*, such as space and time, exist before anyone can imagine his or her life (Guyer, 1980). According to Kant, Hume effectively discounted the relationship of cause-and-effect (ultimately undermining the physical sciences entirely) on the mistaken ground that an unperceived cause must not exist. Reese (1999) summarized Kant effectively: “We never experience anything except it be in space or time, and yet we never experience space or time” (p. 373). In short, Kant’s critique of Hume is that his rejection of personal identity, employing the analogy of space and time, is self-defeating. Simply because the *self* cannot be perceived, it does not follow that the *self* cannot exist. The existence of the self is presupposed by the impressions that man assimilates into his mind via the senses. The evolving theories of self-identity presented thus far demonstrate two key points relevant to this study’s purpose: 1) the identity of self is primarily manufactured as a result of physical, sensory experiences, and 2) the individual’s mental response to sensory experiences also has a significant impact on a person’s sense of identity (Maitlis, 2009). Given the fact that an athlete’s experience is primarily based on physical conditioning, training and expertise playing the sport, Hume’s theory of knowledge and understanding based on sensory experience is relevant. Likewise, the athlete’s perceptions of self-based on mental training and understanding of the sport are supported by Kant’s perspective of the identity of self-based on one’s mental faculties. Both philosophies can lend an understanding to a former professional athlete’s perceptions of identity-based on both physical and

psychological experiences. Moving forward in the chronology of rational understanding of self-identity takes us to the 19th century where Hegel and Kierkegaard begin to further propel the sense of identity as a fluid, changing the concept that is developed over a person's lifetime. These advancing theories are relevant to this study's exploration of how professional athletes' perceive their identities are changing throughout their career, and in particular, how retirement from their professional career has a lasting impact on their sense of self.

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1807) rejected both Hume and Kant and turned the entire enterprise of self-discovery upside down. According to Hegel, one does not first discover their *self* and then understand his relationship to others, but he discovers the *other* first, and then comes to know their *self* about other individuals and external stimuli (Ferro, 2013). As one becomes accustomed to his surroundings and relationships, both personal and impersonal, one begins to form an identity by such relationships, and in turn, the *self*-develops. Hegel's theory of self-discovery based on the relationship to others supports the idea that athletes, in general, are strongly influenced by their participation in a team sport such as baseball, and that their relationship to team members as part of a professional sport would strongly impact their perceptions of personal identity. According to Hegel (2002), it is important to recognize that the *self* is not discovered in relationship to external stimuli, but the *self* is formed as these relationships are forged and synthesized into a personal identity concept. If as Hegel suggests, a person's relationship with others largely determines an

individual's personal identity, then the argument can be made that his or her identification shapes an athlete uniquely because he/she is participating in a team sport. Further, that identity would be enhanced when the athlete is selected to play on a professional sports team. In the context of a professional sports team, the athlete is evaluated and chosen to play on a team based on their abilities and value and as an athlete, and their relationship with team players will largely determine whether or not the athlete is successful in the workplace. Hegel's theories are critical in understanding how a professional MLB athlete develops his perceptions of self-identity based on his association with his teammates in a high-stakes, professional setting where one's success and career depends on the interactions and collaboration with other team players. While human relationships play a significant role in the development of self-identity (Hegel, 2002), Hegel's scholarly opponents argued that even though outside influences have an impact on one's identity, inward reflection is the real genesis of self-discovery. A synthesis of the theories of outside and inward forces will prove useful in understanding the complexities of how professional athletes perceive their identity throughout the changes in their career.

The Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard ultimately rejected Hegel's ideologies as he advanced what later scholars would come to term a *narrative self*. The concept of narrative self-states that the *self* is and is steadily developing (Malik, 1997). For example, if one were to travel, one would not say that their entire self or identity changed just because of this one life

experience, even though such travels are a component of the person's narrative. While the individual's identity is affected by a person's travels or any other experience, it would be a mistake to associate one's identity with any particular activity or event. The identity is something else, rather it is always changing and growing but is never defined by the moment at hand. That said, how can one be living out a narrative and have any experiences at all without being a *self*? Kierkegaard's answer to this question came by discerning different dimensions within one's personal self.

According to Stokes (2011), Kierkegaard resolved this tension between one's narrative self and the ever-changing identity by affirming both a *minimalist self* as well as a *narrative self*. The weaker self is the individual who stands in relationship to his or her experiences past and present but has not yet awakened to his or her full story that can only be experienced once the entire narrative is realized. Thus, one can never truly know oneself entirely, and this identity is less of a substantial reality and more of a dialectical reality that can only be understood from the perspective of the relationships that exist between a person and his or her experiences (Stokes, 2011). One might suggest that for Kierkegaard and later existentialists, the question of knowing oneself and the question of identity can be no more understood than someone still reading through the middle chapters of a novel trying to understand the outcome of the characters' lives as presented on the final page. The story is always *becoming* what the ultimate narrative will be; therefore, what is important is not defining

but experiencing it. Kierkegaard's philosophical perspective, in particular, supports the need to analyze the attitude of professional athletes as they make the difficult transition from player to retired player. A professional athlete's life does not end with retirement. Rather, this exit point is just the midpoint of the novel, so to speak, and the beginning of a new life where perhaps an entirely new aspect of the identity must be formed. The psychological impact of this transition in the life of a professional athlete is undeniable, and gaining a better understanding of former athletes' perceptions during this transition will help determine suggestions for coping and assimilation that can be valuable not only for professional athletes themselves, but for any athlete that faces inevitable transitions in their relationship to their sport due to aging and changing life circumstances. Likewise, understanding the various philosophical understandings of how and why identity forms, and the significance of how changes to self-identity impact the life of the individual, allows the researcher to study professional athletes to form a basis for a greater understanding of how human identity is influenced and shaped by inevitable life changes. From the position that identity is not all about the narrative nor is it entirely about the relationship to outward experiences, Jean-Paul Sartre furthered Kierkegaard's existentialist proposition.

Jean-Paul Sartre furthered Kierkegaard's existentialist proposition by following the line of thought that man's self is steadily *becoming* as a person's identity is established through one's actions (Sartre, 2002). One does not act a

certain way because of his or her identity, but his or her identity becomes what it is as a result of what one chooses to do or not do throughout the course of one's life. Sartre employed the analogy of reading through a novel and compared one's identity as more akin to the process an author undergoes as he seeks to tell a story and sees his best-laid plans change as the tale is written. As Wang (2007) summarized Sartre's view,

Our free actions are not the consequence of our identity, they are its foundation, and it is our nature as human beings to always to go beyond whom we are towards a freely chosen self; our freedom allows us constantly to redesign and rebuild our identity (p. 1).

Sartre's contribution to the understanding of how identity forms suggest that from the very moment that the athlete decided to play an individual sport their identity then began to build based on every action taken as a result of that decision. Professional athletes do not just wake up one morning to find they have been chosen to play MLB; rather, much of the athlete's life and decisions up to that point were based on the hope and potential of reaching the desired outcome of playing the sport at a professional level. From Sartre's perspective, every practice, every game, and every decision made as an athlete that leads up to one's professional career shapes the athlete's identity. In that line of thinking, every action that the athlete takes will develop his identity as a professional athlete. It would, therefore, follow that the decisions made as the athlete leave

the sport to begin a new chapter in his life will have a significant impact on the person's identity removed from the public arena of MLB.

Historical and Philosophical Models of Personal Identity in Relation to Psychology

All of the philosophies previously mentioned helped to form a foundation for our current understanding of how identity is formed within the field of psychology. The existentialist position, together with the insights of many of the other above thinkers, began to take a more practical turn once psychology began to be recognized as an independent discipline in the early 20th century. Moving from an understanding of the philosophical impressions of how self-identity exists and is formed, to a psychological understanding of identity development brings the researcher to the present day and provides a complete picture of how identity studies are relevant and valuable in support of an individual's personal growth and well-being. The psychological importance of the formation and changing perceptions of identity further illustrate the significance of this study as an inquiry into professional athletes' perceptions of identity and the challenges faced during the difficult transition into retirement.

Historical and Philosophical Models of Personal Identity in Relation to Kantian View

Early psychologists, whose discipline grew out of the empirical sciences and philosophy, developed concepts of personal identity that paralleled the

beliefs developed by earlier philosophers. Wilhelm Wundt commonly considered the father of experimental psychology, embraced a largely Kantian view of personal identity. Edward Bradford Titchener departed from his mentor Wundt in compelling ways, embracing an empirical view of human identity more akin to Locke or Hume (Farrell, 2014). Like Hume, Titchener believed that the self or ego was a mere illusion, as evidenced by the following statement:

Your 'self,' the self that you perceive at this moment, is probably composed of pressures, temperatures, strains, breaths, etc.; that is, the certain total effort of comfortableness or head achiness together with the visual perception of hands and clothes. That is you as you perceive yourself, this mass of felt sensations is yourself. (Titchener, 1919, as cited in Farrell, 2014, p. 280).

Historical and Philosophical Models of Personal Identity in Relation to Gestalt Psychology

Early psychologists explored the links between and their philosophical forebearers at length. According to Farrell (2014), several students of Gestalt psychology were of note in the bridge between the philosophical and psychological concept of self or ego, ultimately contributing to the foundation for how many psychologists would address matters of embodied cognition (Farrell, 2014). In contrast to Gestalt psychology, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory has loomed large in the development of psychology and the study of personal identity.

Historical and Philosophical Models of Personal Identity in Relation to Sigmund Freud

Like Kierkegaard and the existentialists, Freud sought to walk the paradoxical tightrope which viewed humans as *determined, yet free* (Tauber, 2009, p. 42). Even as many have moved beyond Freud's psychoanalytic method, many of his crucial distinctions remain influential in the study of human identity. Freud's division of the mind into primary and secondary processes, conscious and subconscious thought, along with the differentiation of the ego from the id and the superego, continue to serve in seeking a balance between both *being* and *becoming*, or between determinative and adaptive features in identity development (Epstein, 1994). Mostly, Freud took the best of everything that prior thinkers had to offer and formed a bridge from traditional philosophy to psychology and sociology. Freud's psychological theories suggest that on the one hand, an athlete's identity is somewhat predetermined in the sense that he has a proclivity towards athleticism due to natural abilities and an early propensity to enjoy the sport enough to dedicate his life to it as a young person. On the other hand, the athlete as an individual must also adapt to the changes in perceived identity as an athlete based on the development of his abilities and his progression in the hierarchy of the sport from amateur player to professional.

The Evolution of Historical and Philosophical Models Related to Personal Identity

Modern notions of identity have a long heritage since it has been wrestled with, reduced and expanded by theorists for centuries. Understanding the tensions in this early literature will serve this proposal well as later research into personal identity is built upon these ideological foundations. Whether an identity is something to be discovered or developed throughout the course of one's life is a question that has largely been addressed, more recently through the analysis of different identity types. Given the multiplicity of identity classifications and definitions, it is concluded that individual identity types are not easily operationalized. Nonetheless, the theoretical foundations established by the philosophers and psychologists listed in this review suggest that the athletic identity of a professional MLB athlete is based on a combination of personal experiences, actions, and determining factors associated with the inclusion into Major League Baseball. The understanding of the historical context of identity studies provides a basis for the researcher's inquiry into the issues of identity that these professional athletes face in the transition to retirement.

Erickson and Ego Identity

To this point, the literature review has illustrated two main theories of the developmental process of self-identity: (a) one's identity develops through time based on external circumstances and (b) one's identity is determined by how one's environment influences the perception one has of his- or herself. Erik Erickson's psychosocial stage theory postulated eight consecutive stages one passes through during life and through which one's personality develops.

Specifically, the psychosocial stage theory suggests that there is a relationship between the maturities of one's personality as his or her identity is continuously formed through a successive mastery of each of Erickson's eight stages (Erickson, 1968).

According to Erickson (1968), as an individual matures and encounters new social experiences, one's *ego identity* consequentially evolves. Unlike Freud's developmental theory, which focused on psychosexual stages, Erickson's theory persists throughout the course of one's life, from the cradle to the grave (Cote & Levine, 1987). Erickson did, however, embrace the tripartite division of the human psyche into id, ego, and superego. While it is beyond the scope of this study to detail the distinctions between the three, what Erickson means by "ego" is mostly the conscious awareness of self that develops as one proceeds throughout the various stages of life, particular in his or her social interactions with others (Erickson, 1968).

Erickson identified two dominant characteristics which together define ego identity: (a) recognition of temporal-spatial continuity of the ego, which he views as a *sine qua non* of ego identity (Cote & Levine, 1987), and (b) the configuration of positive and negative identity elements (self-concepts) that unify individuals' experiences of themselves during interaction with the social world. According to Erickson (1968), these components emerge from a variety of sources and experiences forming:

. . . a configuration [which] is gradually established by successive ego syntheses and resynthesizes... It is a configuration gradually integrating constitutional givens, idiosyncratic liminal needs, favored capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses, successful sublimations, and consistent roles. (p. 163)

As in Freud, Erickson argued that the *ego* develops throughout one's life and is influenced by the other components of the psyche such as the id and superego, the former of which can be predisposed to particular tendencies or traits of habit (Cote & Levine, 1987). As a person progresses through each of Erickson's eight stages, he believed, that the "ego identity" faced new challenges that could either further develop or hinder the development of one's identity (Erickson, 1968). Erickson theorized that the individual seeks competence as he progresses through each stage of life. If a stage is managed poorly, the person will incorporate a sense of inadequacy into his identity, but if the stage is mastered, he will gain psychosocial strengths (Erickson, 1968; Cherry, 2005). Social conflict provides an opportunity for an individual to either rise to the challenge efficiently and grow more confident about oneself, or to fail to manage the dispute, thereby ushering insecurities into one's conscious sense of self (Erickson, 1968).

Both strengths and weaknesses are evident in Erickson's psychosocial theory. On the one hand, it supposes in an existentialist sense that individuals are always in the process of discovering the self; this is because Erickson's broad framework of psychosocial development persists throughout the entire lifespan

(Cherry, 2005). Erickson's theory also places much emphasis upon the social qualities of human interactions and experiences recognizing that one's development does not occur in a vacuum but always in relationship with others (Cherry, 2005). That said, one potential weakness in Erickson's theory is that the precise mechanisms available whereby one might resolve conflicts and progress from one stage to the next is not well defined in his writings (Cherry, 2005). While experiences are given across the various stages of one's psychosocial development, the theory is of limited utility because Erickson never fully detailed the types of experiences necessary at each stage and how success and failure are variously defined in each developmental stage (Cherry, 2005). Since the progress from one developmental stage to the next is not well defined and has not been examined in research, this proposal for research into the stage of development that occurs in MLB athletes as they transition into and out of the arena of professional sports could be a valuable contribution to the field of identity studies and will help bridge a gap in existing literature.

Erickson's notion of ego identity emphasizes a *conscious* sense of self that develops within social contexts (Erickson, 1968). In Erickson's eight stages, the final stage leads an individual to either *ego integrity* or *despair*, and the side upon which one falls depends largely upon how successfully one's ego identity developed across the eight stages (Cote & Levine, 1987). Erickson associates this final stage with individuals aged 65-plus and with retirement. For the sake of this proposal, this insight into the last stage of development and the high stakes

of *ego integrity* versus *despair* becomes particularly poignant. If Erickson's theories are correct, how does a younger retirement, as often experienced in professional sports, including MLB, interrupt one's ego development?

If the tension between *ego integrity* and *despair* are experienced before a person has progressed through all of the stages necessary for healthy ego development, it might explain why some athletes suffer unique identity struggles that are different from the general population. Furthermore, because ego identity develops mostly through social interactions (Bullock et., 1990), the unique experiences of retired professional athletes place them among a small crowd of individuals who can relate to their particular struggles (Pankey, 1993). Without connecting on a psychosocial level with others who are navigating the same struggles, unprecedented identity crises could theoretically account for some of the struggles this population experiences (Pankey, 1993). Therefore it can be concluded that many factors influence identity and that one can simultaneously ascribe to multiple identities that include social, racial and ethnic identity, professional standards, as well as masculinity (Cieslak, 2004). Because many factors influence identity, this study will employ multiple methodologies to capture one's perceptions of self (e.g. surveys, interviews).

Identity categories. Building upon the consensus of post-Cartesian thought that identity is not entirely innate, but is either wholly or in part developed by influencing experiences encountered throughout the course of life, theorists in psychology and sociology have proposed theories to explain the

development of identity as it occurs from birth until death. Throughout history the notion of identity has developed and evolved, effectively setting the stage for the ongoing studies of today. After addressing the history of identity concepts in the Western world, various domains, models, and categories through which identity has been investigated will be considered. The idea of identity presupposes a developmental approach and the theories posited by various thinkers and categories below will be essential for understanding how athletic identity develops within individuals involved in sports.

Social identity. Another plausible explanation for how people conceive their identities is related to their social interactions. According to Tajfel (2010), Erickson's theory of ego identity, particularly because social relationships are the primary mechanism which an individual progresses throughout his eight stages, is naturally complimentary to what other researchers have termed *social identity*. Social identity is the process experienced by a person who begins to define himself or others within a system of social categorizations. For Tajfel (1972), social identity is an "individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him as the group membership" (p. 31). Following this line of thought, Turner (1975) advanced the argument that one's concept of *self*, including social identity, involves a complex interplay of factors that can at times operate independently of one another. Also, Turner explained this phenomenon as follows, suggesting that the above hypothesis is true, "...then the possibility arises that social identity may on

occasions function more or less to the exclusion of personal identity, i.e. that at certain times our salient self-images may be based solely or primarily on our group memberships” (p. 67).

Individuals may derive their self-identity concept anywhere along a continuum from personal to social identity to the extent that for some people, apart from one’s group memberships, one has little understanding of oneself (Turner, 1975). The concept of an identity continuum as it relates to being a member of a group is undoubtedly significant as MLB players, who spend the majority of the year with their team. Although baseball has the longest season, professional athletes in other sports are particularly prone to developing personal identities bound to their membership on a team (Warriner & Lavalley, 2008). Upon retirement, a likelihood that one would struggle to re-define himself in the absence of a team atmosphere and the community it engenders is certainly high (Warriner & Lavalley, 2008). Different categories or communities often develop and consequently affect how one’s social identity is realized, and this applies in particular regarding diverse racial or ethnic communities.

Racial and ethnic identity. In societies where racially and ethnically oriented communities emerge as sub-cultures distinct from the larger culture, individuals are more likely to employ a racial or ethnic concept as a major factor influencing one’s identity (Adhikari, 2005). Several researchers have examined how race and ethnicity plays a role in one’s concept of self (e.g. Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997). Given the diversity in MLB, the possible influence

of racial and ethnicity identity must be considered. According to Phinney (1990), ethnic identity has become an increasingly difficult phenomenon to measure due to the prevalence of mixed families, enculturation that blurs ethnic lines, and a variety of additional cultural and historical factors that go into racial and ethnic identifiers. Priest et al., (2014) have examined the progress in ethnic-racial socialization and identity research spanning the previous thirty years. MLB has seen a significant demographic shift in recent decades; research shows that a smaller portion of players identifies as African American and a larger portion of players identify as Latino (Aris, Farrell, & Birke, 2016). The ways in which these demographic changes and ethnic identities might intersect and overlap with other domains of athletic identity as experienced by MLB players is a subject that has not been previously explored throughout literature. What traits or assumptions regarding one's racial or ethnic upbringing might influence employment, a place where social interactions will expand beyond the confines of one's ethnic community? Occupational identity has a way of transcending racial and ethnic lines as individuals from different backgrounds unite around common tasks or purposes (Carbado & Gulati, 1999).

Occupational identity. According to Ashford and Kreiner (1999), any given line of work has a unique set of central, distinctive, and enduring characteristics that set it apart from other avocations. The longer a particular worker or professional persists in a certain line of work, the more likely he or she is to incorporate some of those unique characteristics into his or her sense of self

(Brown, 2004). The tendency for the particularities of one's line of work to affect a person's identity and consequently one's values and behaviors is a phenomenon several researchers have termed *occupational identity* (Martin et al., 2006; Bothma et al., 2015).

As researchers initially examined the concept of professional identity, a fundamental issue to examine was why some jobs tend to nourish a sense of professional identity more pervasively than other jobs. In a study by Walsh and Gordon (2007), a high correlation was observed between occupations that necessitate high degrees of skill and mastery, and a stronger sense of professional identity was assumed by those who work in such professions. In other words, a professional athlete who possesses a rare skill is more likely to have a strong sense of professional identity than someone who works in a job that requires broader skills that can be easily trained. If an individual possesses a strong sense of professional identity, it might be assumed that particular dimensions of the individual's employment might carry over into other areas of their life. Martin et al., (2006) concluded that the more an individual personally identifies with his or her line of work, the more likely he or she is to construct a set of values, attitudes, and beliefs that accord with one's line of work. How an individual's professional identity manifests elsewhere in their life will likely draw upon the particular tasks associated with one's work, but might also draw upon other traits that may not be essential to the job itself. Some aspects of occupational identity could also be characterized by the cultural or social values

of the demographic that tend to dominate the position (Martin et al., 2006). Occupations where an individual's gender tends to have a significantly higher presence than the other gender might result in a professional identity that is profoundly influenced by social values associated with one's gender. It is not surprising that several researchers have noted strong parallels between the professional identity of professional athletes in male dominated sports and masculine identity.

Masculine identity. Within the context of professional sports, where one's occupation is highly segregated according to gender, gender-based identity concepts can be highly associated with one's professional identity. Stein and Hoffman (1980) have closely linked the concept of a male's development into manhood with athletic ability by stating that the development of athletic ability is an essential element in becoming a man. Masculinity is understood in the literature as being both culturally defined and held up regarding expectations placed upon males especially since these expectations progress from adolescence into adulthood (Craig, 1992; Bothma et al., 2015). The link between athletics and masculinity is so close that Sabo and Runford (1980) argued that regarding identity, masculinity and athleticism are practically interchangeable.

Research has mostly suggested that athletes tend to integrate masculinity into their identities more prominently than non-athletes (Stein & Hoffman, 1980). According to research by Stein and Hoffman (1980), even non-athletes agreed that athletics was an important component of how manhood is defined, as

they struggled to achieve membership in peer groups comprised of more athletically-oriented males. Accordingly, masculinity, or being one of the boys, is a strong identity-forming feature amongst male athletes. Colley, Roberts, & Chipps (1985) found that athletes scored higher on the Bern Role Sex Inventory (BMSI) in masculinity than non-athletes. Caron, Carter, and Brightman (1985) produced identical results but additionally found that individuals involved in team sports tend to score higher regarding masculinity on the BMSI than athletes who participate in individual sports, suggesting that the peer-driven team atmosphere is a critical component in fostering masculine identity amongst athletes. Lantz and Schroeder (1999), in a study of student-athletes comprised of both male and females, discovered that athletes reported stronger masculine sex-role orientations regardless of biological gender than did non-athletes. The literature suggests that the association of masculine identity with athletic identity could have a significant impact on MLB players during their transition into retirement. According to research by Carswell (2008), not only do elite level athletes have stronger associations between their athletic pursuits and masculine identity than amateur or less accomplished athletes, but elite athletes also are also at a greater risk to experience psychological distress and feel that their masculinity is threatened with the termination of their participation in the sport. The research of this proposed study will contribute to the field of identity studies by examining how former MLB players' sense of masculine identity is impacted by a departure from the sport that has fundamentally shaped their sense of self

from adolescence into adulthood. Apparently, several influences and domains conflate into a general notion and understanding of one's self. How do these various influences and identity types relate, compete, or affect one another within a single individual's overall experience? To answer this question, several researchers in recent years have begun to study the concept of multiple identities.

Multiple Identities and Human Capacity

Reynolds and Pope (1991) initially drew researchers' attention to the issue of multiple identities through their study of oppressed populations. They created the Multidimensional Identity Model based on four quadrants of identity resolution, including active and passive identification on one axis, and singular and multiple aspects of self on the other axis. In other words, different dimensions of one's identity might be more reflective or passive, while other concepts of identity could be related to several different aspects of the idea of self, presenting an individual with a multifaceted sense of personal identity. While Reynolds and Pope had a relatively narrow scope of their analysis of multiple identities, their work nonetheless set the stage for further research to examine the issues associated with multiple identities in a broader context. Their research also drew other scholars' attention to the pitfalls of placing too much emphasis on singular dimensions of an individual's identity. It became important for subsequent researchers to consider how multiple identities affect one another within a person's overall concept of self. The literature presented here is relevant within the scope of this proposed research as this study could examine if and

how MLB players are positively or negatively affected by a sense of multiple identities.

Deaux (1993) was a social psychologist, who expanded Reynolds and Pope's proposed model beyond its relevance to oppressed peoples. She argued that the quadrants suggested by Reynolds and Pope commit a fallacy by suggesting that one either assumes internal or external sources of identity. According to Deaux, identity is always defined internally by oneself and externally by others, and these inner and outer dimensions relate differently from individual to individual. Such differences ultimately results in identities that are unique to each's experience and decisions involved in reconciling various influences in one's life. While Deaux presents an intriguing theory, she fails to address how her theory applies to identity development throughout the course of life. While a few attempts have been made to address this question, it remains a significant gap in the research. Nonetheless, some unique and creative theories have continued to emerge based off of the previous literature.

McEwen (1996), a mathematician and physicist, drew upon her expertise to consider how multiple identity dimensions and developmental processes might be represented. Her ultimate goal was to envision a method whereby multiple identities are presented across the lifespan. She proposed a model that saw one's identity concept visualized by a *cone*. As the length and circumference of the *cone* expand, it represents an increasing complexity in one's identity throughout life as one's age, education, and experiences evolve. McEwen's model allows

one to envision a picture of how various domains of influence intersect and how they have interacted in the course of one's life. As all of the ideologies from high bond together and multiple identities converge, they give way to what may be the most significant factor for many MLB players, the notion of athletic identity.

Athletic Identity

Despite the plurality and multifactorial nature of identity, the study is primarily focused on the conceptions associated with the athletic identity. The concept of *athletic identity* became a frequent topic of study during the 1990s and had persisted as such ever since (Cieslak, 2004). Scholars during the early 1990s began to modify their understanding of the concept (Cieslak, 2004). A standard definition of athletic identity was introduced by Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) as the “degree to which an individual identifies with the athletic role” (p. 237), which eventually became widely recognized across athletic identity literature. The significance of this definition is that it distinguished from previous notions of athletic identity associated with actual participation in athletic activities (Brewer et al., 1993). Earlier researchers, for example, defined athletic identity as both a cognitive structure and a social role (Shavelson et al., 1976). Cognitively then, one's athletic identity can function as a framework through which one interprets information, develops coping strategies for both personal and career-related crises, and influences behavior consistent with the athletic role (Horton & Mack, 2000). Cieslak's definition, however, as the “degree of importance, strength, and exclusivity attached to the athlete role

that is maintained by the athletes and influenced by environment” is more comprehensive and will be assumed for this dissertation (Cieslak, 2004, p. 39).

Webb et al., (1998) discovered in their research that in most cases, athletic identity is formed early in an individual’s life, often as early as the elementary school years. During these formative schooling years, this is often a time when a child’s talent is initially recognized and can become a significant component of their peer interactions (Webb et al., 1998). The stronger one’s sense of athletic identity becomes in their early years the more difficult it becomes for a person to redefine his or her self-concept later in life (Webb et al., 1998). Considering that many professional athletes began playing sports at a young age, were successful student-athletes in their peer groups, and athletic identity has been emerging since childhood, retirement from professional sports can be a traumatic experience of identity loss (Cabrita et al., 2014). Several researchers, accordingly, agree that the stronger and more exclusive one’s athletic identity, the greater risk one faces of struggling both socially and emotionally when retiring from sports (Brewer et al., 1993; Gordon & Lavelle, 2001; Grove, Lavelle, & Gordon, 1997; Taylor & Lavelle, 2010). Adjustment difficulties during this period have been known to range from low self-confidence, increased anxiety, and disordered eating (Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Papathomas & Lavalley, 2006; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993), to clinical depression, substance abuse, and even attempted suicide (Ogilvie & Howe, 1982).

In a recent study, Miller (2009) further refined the study of athletic identity by differentiating within the findings two distinct sport-related identities: the “athlete” and the “jock” identity. According to Miller, athlete identity tends to have a more positive impact on an individual and his or her role within a community, is more task-oriented, and includes both genders. The “jock” identity tends to align with and insist upon masculine norms (i.e. winning), is more ego-oriented, and can orient itself negatively towards others (p. 69). While these two sports-oriented identities are related in that individuals who possess them are typically both involved in sports, Miller emphasizes that they should be differentiated in measurement criteria because in all other respects the “athletic” and “jock” identities are opposites. In light of Miller’s work, it is worth reassessing how much of “masculine identity” should be attributed to athletic identity. If Miller’s assessment is correct, it may be more appropriate to associate “masculine identity” with “jock identity,” pending additional research.

Summary of Categories of Identity Related to Athletic Identity

Clearly, the interest of this dissertation is primarily directed toward the concept of athletic identity. What is clear is that athletic identity is not an isolated category that can be wholly understood apart from other domains of identity influence (Grove et al., 1998). As historical and philosophical influences on the topic of identity developed, eventually moving to the realm of psychology, the tendency was to go from an either/or model that saw identity as something that was either innate within man and must be discovered, or

something that is wholly in the process and developing. Newer models moved away from the dichotomous either/or approach to a both/and model that recognizes how both natural components of identity as well as processes throughout life work in relationship to one another to form a broader identity concept developed throughout the course of life. Additionally, as different categories or sources of identity have been explored and developed, it has been increasingly acknowledged that the influences upon any individual's identity are many and varied with some domains holding greater or lesser influence over some individuals than others (Bothma et al., 2015).

When athletic identity began to be studied seriously in the 1990s and beyond, it became clear that athletic identity has both many similarities and differences with other domains of identity influence (Oregon, 2010). Some individuals who possess a strong athletic identity find that it plays a pivotal role in shaping their ego identity (as understood by Erickson), social identity, and even their ethnic identity as sports often creates a team-based community that transcends other ethnic/racial boundaries within communities. Other domains, such as masculine identity, are fostered by athletic identity (Stein & Hoffman, 1980). Work-related identity, in particular, can become nearly inseparable from athletic identity amongst professional athletes whose sport becomes their profession (Carswell, 2008). Because athletic identity forms its deepest roots regarding impact earlier in life than most work-related identities, professional athletes are in a unique position with a sense of work-related identity that is often

indistinguishable from the dominant athletic identity that has formed their concept of self (Baillie & Danish, 1992). For this reason, when viewing the impact of retirement or career transitions upon professional athletes, it is important to recognize that the experience of identity loss can be more profound than it might be for individuals in other professions (Lavalley, et., al 1997; Roberts et al., 2015). A later section of this literature review will examine how identity loss has been studied in research, especially since different domains of loss overlap, and impact professional athletes. Next, the most common and reliable instruments for measuring athletic identity will be considered.

Measuring Athletic Identity

How can something as intangible as “identity,” not to mention something as specific as “athletic identity,” be effectively measured and therefore, studied scientifically? Since the topic of athletic identity was initially examined in the later decades of the 20th century, several attempts to effectively measure the depth and extent of which one’s athletic identity accounts for one’s broader identity concept have been attempted (Cieslak, 2004). What these approaches intend to do is provide a quantifiable scale whereby the prevalence of athletic identity in one’s concept of self can be measured and understood, particularly in relationship to other influential identity-orienting domains (Cieslak, 2004). Due to the nature of identity, and athletic identity specifically, as a multifaceted phenomenon drawing upon some concurrently acting influences throughout the course of one’s identity development, the models developed have had varying

strengths and weaknesses (Cieslak, 2004). While these models are not comprehensive, the Sports Identities Index (Curry & Weaner, 1987), and the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale are widely considered the most reliable and frequently employed instruments available to researchers (Cieslak, 2004).

Sport Identities Index (SII). In the late 1980s, Curry (1987; 1988) developed the Sport Identities Index (SII), which was the first attempt to quantifiably measure the degree to which an individual's sport-defined identity defines the person as a whole. Although the SII has been limited in its application (Cieslak, 2004), it was developed primarily to measure salience and the hierarchy of various domains of identity contained within an individual's broader concept of self (Curry, 1987; 1988). Curry and Weaner (1987) employed a scale measuring the commitment of a person to a sports-defined identity concept (Cieslak, 2004). According to Cieslak (2004), Curry & Weaner (1987) hypothesized that a substantial relationship existed between the salience of the individual's sport identity and the level of the individual's involvement in sports. They also theorized that these internal variables would have a positive association with unrelated external commitments.

Abbott et al., (1999), utilized the SII in a study comprised of 159 male collegiate baseball players to demonstrate that the level of importance attached to athletic identity influences daily decision making (Abbott et al., 1999; Cieslak 2004). According to this study, while it might be possible for an athlete to consider his athletic identity as less valuable than other domains of identity

within his self-concept, the majority of athletes relied upon their athletic identity more extensively than other domains about daily decision making (Abbott et al., 1999). While the SII remains a valuable tool for researchers, its use has been largely eclipsed by the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS). That said, Cieslak (2004) has suggested that several strengths of the SII have been incorporated into versions of the AIMS to improve its outcomes.

Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS). Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder (1993) developed the first Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) to assess how strongly and exclusively individuals identify with the athlete role. The AIMS can be utilized as a self-evaluation tool, though it may also be administered as a component of the study (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). The AIMS was designed specifically for measuring athletic identity through a ten item quantitative inventory encompassing social, cognitive and affective dimensions of athletic identity (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Participants in an AIMS inventory, which may include both athletes and non-athletes, are asked to rate on a scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree) their position regarding the ten specified statements (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). The answers can be easily tabulated to produce a single self-evaluation score that indicates a participant's athletic identity (Brewer Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Cieslak, 2004). One weakness of the AIMS, according to Cieslak (2004) is that it does not measure different athletic domains, such as social identity, self-identity, exclusivity, negative

affectivity and positive affectivity. According to Cieslak (2004), there have been numerous studies that suggest a unidimensional approach to measuring athletic identity is insufficient. The original ten items measured in AIMS are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Original Ten Items Measured in Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS)

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

Note: From Describing and Measuring the Athletic Identity Construct: Scale Development and Validation (p. 106), by T.J. Cieslak II, 2004

Athletic Identity Measurement Scale Plus (AIMS-Plus). The AIMS-Plus did not revise the original ten statements from AIMS but instead sought to expand it as an instrument taking into account subsequent research (Ciesak, 2004). The AIMS-Plus drew upon Stryker and Burke’s theories (2002), that

posited identity formation as formed through social reality, were applied to the instrument. The AIMS-Plus was designed to account for both internal components (i.e. self-identity, positive affectivity, and negative affectivity) as well as external components (i.e. social identity and exclusivity; Oregon, 2010). By linking athletic identity to social structures, the AIMS-Plus was a marked improvement over the original AIMS and accounted for newer research into identity formation (Oregon, 2010). A total of nine items were taken from Curry and Weaner’s (1987) Sport Identity Index (SII) and included in the AIMS-Plus. These additional elements of the AIMS-Plus are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Additional Elements of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale Plus (AIMS-Plus)

Item	Statement
4.	I only enjoy sport when I am winning.
6.	I participate in the sport of the recognition/fame.
13.	My family expects me to participate in sport.
15.	I participate in sport because I want to make a career of it.
17.	My sports involvement has influenced my day-to-day decision making.
18.	I continuously think about how I can become a better athlete.
19.	It is important that other people know about my sport involvement.
20.	I typically organize my day, so I can participate in sports.
27.	Being an athlete is an important part of who I am.

Note: From *Describing and Measuring the Athletic Identity Construct: Scale Development and Validation* (p. 107), by T.J. Cieslak II, 2004

To increase the face validity of the additional instrument items were also added, modified from the SII to both remain conceptually consistent with the original AIMS and to increase the number of items per dimension. The additional six items are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Additional Six Items of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale Plus (AIMS-Plus)

Item	Statement
1.	I only enjoy sport when I am winning.
2.	I participate in the sport of the recognition/fame.
3.	My family expects me to participate in sport.
4.	I participate in sport because I want to make a career of it.
5.	My sports involvement has influenced my day-to-day decision making.
6.	I continuously think about how I can become a better athlete.

Note: From *Describing and Measuring the Athletic Identity Construct: Scale Development and Validation* (p. 107), by T.J. Cieslak II, 2004

The second and third versions of AIMS-Plus. The second and third versions of AIMS-Plus were developed as a component of Cieslak’s (2004) dissertation based off of his studies on the validity of AIMS-Plus and recommendations from a panel of experts. The experts were asked to evaluate each line-item in the AIMS-Plus according to the appropriateness of its item to the dimension it was intended to measure. In result, the majority of AIMS-Plus was retained, though some questions were reworded and replaced (Cieslak, 2004).

The Third Version of the AIMS-Plus (Cieslak, 2004) integrated both private and public dimensions of personal identity (Nasco & Webb, 2006). The Third Version of the AIMS-Plus was based on the original ten questions of the AIMS (Cieslak, 2004), included components of previous versions of the AIMS-Plus, and elements from the SII (Curry & Weaner, 1987). After additional field testing of the second version of AIMS-Plus, several questions were recorded for the third version. For example, as Cieslak (2004) reported:

...three problematic items of the social identity dimension seemed to be the result of poor wording. Namely, “athletes” in this university context could be a very specific term indicating actual student-athletes that were participating in varsity sports on campus. Thus, the following statements were rewritten: “Most of my friends are athletes.” was rewritten to read “Most of my friends participate in sport.” and “Other people see me mainly as an athlete.” was revised to read “Other people see me as an athletic person.” (Cieslak, 2004, p. 146)

In conclusion, while Cieslak (2004) suggests additional improvements could be made and studied, the third version of AIMS-Plus proved to have the best outcomes, accounted for larger domains of personal identity, and improved the ease and use of the instrument by participants. Due to Cieslak’s improvements to the AIMS-Plus, this is currently considered the most reliable instrument to date for measuring athletic identity that takes into account all relevant influences, both internal and external (Cieslak, 2004; Cabrita et al.,

2014). Cieslak (2004) specifically recommended that the AIMS-Plus be administered to professional athletes.

Transitional Loss of Identity

While the majority of research in identity studies involves defining identity and categorizing identity according to sources and types (Abdelal et al., 2001), one of the more pressing matters, particularly for those with a therapeutic or sociological interest, is the issue of identity loss. Researchers have explored several categories of identity loss. For these purposes, the two most relevant forms of identity loss impacting professional athletes will be examined according to research, work-related identity loss (particularly how it is related to athletic identity loss for professional athletes) (Anderson, 2012) and identity foreclosure (Oregon, 2010).

Work-related identity loss and athletic identity loss. Throughout the course of one's professional life, regardless of the particular profession, transitions and changes in both relationships and roles are practically inevitable. According to Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly (2014), the loss is an inevitable component of one's work life. Retirement is only one form of work-related identity loss (Conroy & O'Leary, 2014). Changes in jobs, positions, evolving work relationships and team memberships, or even changes in prestigious work locations, can involve disruptions to work-related identity (Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014). All of these things contribute to one's broader conception of self, or one's identity (Dutton, Roberts & Bednar, 2010). Several researchers have

examined how work-related injury, which might disrupt one's daily work environment, force a change in role or force an earlier than anticipated retirement, can impact one's identity (Maitlis, 2009; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011).

For professional athletes the sense of athletic identity and work-related identity has significant overlap (Chreim et al., 2007); however, unlike other work-related identities, because athletic identity is initially formed at a much younger age (Webb et al., 1998), the dominating force of a professional athlete's work-related identity as a matter of self-identification is likely excessive (Doolin, 2002). For professional athletes, like MLB players, injury can be a common occurrence and is always a risk. More severe injuries, such as spinal cord injuries, have been evaluated for professional athletes and their "athletic identity" loss by Tasiemski et al., (2004). These researchers found that reintroducing these individuals post-injury to some other form of the team-related environment, or sport, can be beneficial and alleviate the symptoms of depression, anxiety or diminished life satisfaction often associated with identity loss (Tasiemski et al., 2004).

Foreclosed identity. Identity foreclosure, as defined by Marcia (1966) is what occurs when an individual makes a premature commitment to an occupation or ideology, closing themselves off to other sources of identity formation and conceding to the demands of their environment and adopted the social role. More recently, Miller and Kerr (2002) have employed this terminology similarly to describe individuals who have failed to thoughtfully

investigate other roles on account of a premature, or firm commitment to a socially prescribed role which the individual has embraced. Identity foreclosure is frequently experienced by retiring professional athletes (Grove et al., 1998), which is not surprising in light of what much of the previously assessed research in this review has uncovered. Because “athletic identity” tends to dominate in one’s self-image beginning at a young age (Webb et al., 1998), it is not surprising that a foreclosed identity might present problems for those who assume athletics as their dominant narrative of self-identity early in life. Several researchers have found evidence of identity foreclosure in collegiate athletes evidenced by a lack of autonomy, little moral development, and a lack of career planning (Lally & Kerr, 2005; Busseri et al., 2011). The fact that these tendencies would remain unresolved for professional athletes emerging from collegiate systems is unsurprising (Gordon & Harvey, 1998). The notion of foreclosure has particular relevance to this study, given the fact that the researcher is trying to understand one’s athletic identity during an MLB player’s playing days and retirement.

Athletic Identity and Identity Foreclosure

Research has been conducted on what happens to an athlete’s sense of identity when they no longer can participate in their sport. The issue of athletic identity and identity foreclosure has been a significant area of concern for college athletes in particular because there is a large number of student-athletes who must find their way into new careers and new identities after the exit

college. Life after high education typically does not include participating in sport in the same way at a similar level of competition. As such, much of the research on athletic identity and identity foreclosure has been conducted in the setting of higher education as the following studies demonstrate.

Good et al., (1993) conducted a study of male and female college athletes at various campuses across the country to determine how participation in sport and athletic identity related to identity foreclosure. The study included both intramural and varsity level athletes as well as non-athletes, with 301 female and 202 male participants in total. Good et al., (1993) found that the non-athletes did not experience identity foreclosure whereas those more involved in sports were more likely to experience identity foreclosure regardless if they were male or female. The researchers concluded that the extreme time demands of sport participation, as well as the fact that most athletes tend to interact more with just a select group of other athletes, caused the student-athletes to have limited identity-shaping experiences; therefore, the more involved the athletes are in sport, the more likely they are to experience identity foreclosure (Good et al., 1993). Although the participants of this study are not college athletes, they still experienced a similar situation in the extreme time demands of playing off for the MLB and the sense of being part of an exclusive social group of peers during their MLB careers.

Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer (1996) were also interested in athletic identity and identity foreclosure in college students about career maturity. The

participants of this study were both male and female athletes at a Division I school. There was a total of 124 participants in the study, 25 female, and 99 males. As predicted, Murphy and colleagues found that there was a negative correlation between high levels of athletic identity and career maturity. The athletic identity of the participants played a more important role in their lives than any other activities, and student athletes often had unrealistic job expectations. The findings of this study are interesting because the former MLB athletes that participated in this study were able to play their sport as a career successfully, yet there is a similarity in graduating student-athletes and professional athletes who retire and must find jobs beyond their identities as players.

A study of significant relevance to the purpose of the current study is Lally's (2007) of status and athletic retirement among university students. Lally interviewed three male and three female students before, during, and one year after their retirement from their sport within the school setting and found that because the participants had made such a strong commitment to their sport, they anticipated that disruptions in their identities would impact them as a result of retirement. Because the participants were able to recognize that their identities would be affected by this transition, they were able to use various coping strategies throughout the retirement process. The participants expressed that they were able to begin detaching themselves from their strong athletic identity even before they retired to avoid a significant identity crisis (Lally, 2007). Like the

participants in Lally's (2007) research, the former MLB players were also able to anticipate their imminent retirement. While some of the MLB players were forced out of playing professionally earlier than they would have hoped, there is still the understanding among professional athletes that an early retirement, about other career paths, is inevitable.

Whipple (2009) examined the relationship between athletic identity, identity foreclosure, and career maturity of 367 male and female athletes at NCAA Division III conference participating in a variety of different sports. Whipple (2009) found an inverse relation to high athletic identity scores and career maturity similar to other researchers (Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer, 1996). Further, Whipple notes that although there was a relationship between athletic identity, identity foreclosure, and career maturity in the study's participants, Division III athletes had weaker relationships than the Division I players in previous studies. The comparison of these studies demonstrates a correlation between the level at which an athlete participates in the sport, the more likely they are to experience a strong relationship between athletic identity and identity foreclosure upon exiting their sport to continue into future careers.

Athlete Career Transitions

From a psychological perspective, according to Brammer and Abrego (1981), nearly all transitions in life are accompanied by some form of loss, including losses involving significant roles and self-identity. It has long been well established that there is a high correlation between retirement and

experiences of loss in status, identity crises, and losses in direction and personal focus (e.g. Ball, 1976). In other words, retirement poses not only a potential loss of income which can lead to practical difficulties, but losses in income, as well as daily job-oriented activities, can have a profound psychological impact on one's identity (Schut, 1999). As professional athletes retire, some experience similar effects as other retiring populations. Professional athletes also tend to retire at a significantly younger age, and many of them transition into new careers (Maitlis, 2009). Retiring athletes are often "real world" rookies, which is different in regards to navigating a job market than a recent high school graduate, considering the athlete is at a more advanced age with limited marketable experiences outside of their sport (Batten, 1978; Kane, 1991). While some retiring athletes can find jobs related to their sport (i.e. as coaches, television sportscasters, etc.), the vast majority are unable to find employment within the sport subculture, particularly if they do not have high name recognition (Kane, 1991). Even for those who can find new careers, they often encounter difficult adjustments as years of an accumulating and intensifying athletic identity is not merely "switched off" by the retirement decision (Carswell, 2009). According to Brewer (2003), retiring from a sport can be an identity-disrupting event leading many athletes, particularly those who perform at an elite level, susceptible to depression. In light of the above, there are significant risks posed to professional athletes when retiring from their sport.

Positive examples of former athlete career transitions. While adverse outcomes for retiring professional athletes making career transitions are common, they are by no means universal. This literature review would be incomplete without acknowledging the positive examples, or success stories, of athletes who experienced their career transitions with success (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). There is no guarantee that retiring athletes will experience a crisis of identity, as many athletes transition from the sport with very few psychological problems (Ballie, 1993). Allison and Meyer (1988), conducted a study that included retiring professional female tennis players, and it was concluded that upwards of 50 percent of the athletes saw retirement as a relief and viewed retirement as a positive experience in their lives, which allowed them the opportunity to settle into traditional lifestyles. That said, according to the same study, 75% of these athletes remained connected to the sport of tennis in one way or another, either through business ventures or as coaches (Allison & Meyer, 1988). In a study by Greendorfer and Blind (1985), it was determined that most college athletes experienced only mild adjustments when concluding their collegiate careers and not being drafted into a professional sport. While some have suggested that retirement from sport can be likened to a social death (Lerch, 1982; Rosenberg, 1982), other researchers have seen retirement more positively as a social rebirth (Coakley, 1983). More recently, in a study of elite Spanish Olympians, Torregrosa et al., (2004) concluded that the majority of elite athletes who retire from the sport find some way of maintaining a connection to the sport,

sheltering themselves from some of the pitfalls associated with identity loss, and ultimately managed the transition effectively. In conclusion, while the majority of this dissertation focuses on the *distress* that often accompanies transitions amongst professional athletes regarding “identity crises,” the above research offers an important qualification. It is possible to transition from professional sports into other careers in ways that are not only non-traumatic but also by means that can be enriching to an individual’s identity (Allison & Meyer, 1988). Identifying the particular traits of successful transitions relevant to one’s identity is just as important as recognizing what factors contribute to unsuccessful or difficult transitions (Allison & Meyer, 1988).

Negative examples of former athlete career transitions. As early as the 1950s and 1960s researchers have observed negative outcomes from professional athletes retiring from a variety of sports, including alcohol abuse, severe emotional distress, increased risk of illegal behavior, and even increased rates of smoking (Weinberg & Arond, 1952; Hallden, 1965; Mihovilovic, 1968). More recently, a study of Canadian Olympic athletes reported that over 78% reported difficulty making transitions upon their withdrawal from their respective sports, with 32% reporting that the experience was severe or traumatic (Werthner & Orlick, 1986). A proliferation of more recent studies has reported significant numbers of former athletes who have struggled, to varying degrees, with their transitions from their sport (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Oregon; 2010; Stambulova et al., 2009). A study by Baillie and Danish (1993) consisting of 260 former

professional athletes, revealed that a significant majority of respondents indicated that significant adjustments, both functionally and emotionally, were necessary post-retirement and the “adjustment periods” lasted for an average of two years. Additionally, the study found that transitions were smoother for Olympic and collegiate athletes than they are for professional athletes, attributing the disparity to a wider array of diverse experiences and education (Baillie & Danish, 1993). Additionally, Baillie (1993) has suggested several therapeutic ideas for helping these athletes, particularly professional athletes, make the transition to a new career.

The Research Gap: Professional Sports Compared to MLB

Several aspects of MLB set it apart from other professional sports. According to McPherson (1980), former baseball players experience athletic identity differently than other former professional athletes. MLB endures the longest sport season of all professional sports, consisting of 162 regular season games (Owen & King, 2015); the sports that have the longest schedules (outside of professional baseball) are the NBA and NHL, which both annually conduct 82 regular season games (Owen & King, 2015). In MLB, prospective players may be drafted directly from high school, bypassing the collegiate system and thereby avoiding an experience that can be formative for one’s identity outside of the world of athletics (Owen & King, 2015). How might identity foreclosure, for example, be experienced differently by players drafted into professional sports at a younger age? While it might be predicted that these players would experience

identity foreclosure more severely than others, the research to date has not addressed this question. Previous research, furthermore, does not indicate whether or not the age at which one is drafted into professional sports might have an impact on the prognosis for one's success in finding or reframing his identity after retirement from the major leagues.

According to Shea (2004), only 42 players across MLB (approximately 5.6 percent of all active MLB players) previously earned college degrees. The fact that few MLB players have earned college degrees is in contrast to other sports, like the NFL or NBA, where the majority of players are drafted from the collegiate systems, and a higher percentage have completed college degrees (Anderson, 2012). Having a college degree influences athletic identity. Thus identity is likely more entrenched in MLB players due to a lack of other expanding experiences during their formative years. A lack of college experience could also account for additional difficulty transitioning to new careers after retirement.

The average professional MLB career lasts from three to seven years; players tend to begin younger and spend several years in an extensive minor league system (Coakley, 2008). Some aging athletes even return to the minor leagues prolonging their careers after their production begins to decline (Coakley, 2008). It is possible that a lengthier career in MLB has an impact on athletic identity, self-identity, and post-retirement outcomes.

The demographics of MLB are also very different than in other sports. As was demonstrated earlier in this literature review, while the majority of MLB players are Caucasian, the sport has seen a decline in African American participation over recent decades and a surge in players coming from Latin America (Lapchick & Matthews, 2001). How might other identity concepts, such as ethnic identity, impact the role that athletic identity plays in MLB differently than in other sports? This question has not been addressed at any particular length by previous research.

While various studies have examined the outcomes and successes of former MLB players (i.e. Hearle, 1975), no extensive research has been done regarding the role athletic identity plays in former MLB athletes. Due to the many reasons articulated above, it cannot be assumed that conclusions drawn from studies covering other sports' former athletes can apply directly to former MLB players. This dissertation's goal is to fill this gap in the research, employing the most comprehensive tools available for measuring athletic identity (The Third Version of the AIMS-Plus; Cieslak, 2004) to discover how the uniqueness of the MLB lifestyle might impact former players who have retired from the sport.

Summary of Research and Significance for MLB Players

Upon review of the development of identity theory in Western thought, one can conclude that identity is neither *entirely* fixed nor is it *entirely* an ongoing process (Oregon, 2010). Identity is a multifaceted aspect of the human

psyche that draws upon a nearly innumerable host of influences and experiences that all contribute to the formation of a personality and an individual's image of self (Carver & Scheier, 1992). There are elements of a person's identity that are more-or-less immovable, whereas others are flexible (Cherry, 2005). Different domains of identity can be prioritized in a hierarchy of significance for one's concept of self (Cherry, 2005). These insights, particularly as they inform how athletic identity is understood, can be critical for both current and former MLB players. As demonstrated in the literature, athletic identity is often nurtured from a very young age and can have an increasingly firm hold on an individual's self-image, especially since he or she experiences greater success in a sport (Warriner & Lavalley, 2005). Professional athletes, being the most successful performers in their chosen sports, are particularly prone to have strong athletic identity orientations (Coakley, 2006). While this is predictably accurate for MLB players, little research has been done to examine either how much athletic identity affects MLB players or how transitioning out of the sport impacts MLB players uniquely. It will also be of significance to consider how identity loss might affect MLB players as they transition into other careers. Like this review has demonstrated, effective tools for measuring athletic identity have been developed, notably the latest revision of the AIMS-Plus. This dissertation will employ this tool to gather relevant data to better understand how MLB players perceive athletic identity and how their perceptions have changed over time.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Baseball players exhibit identities that are different from other athletes (Heilbrun & Renaud, 2010). Despite the evolution and extended process of establishing one's identity, the loss of knowing who or what one is or is not can occur suddenly (Carver & Scheier, 1992). For example, a major life event (i.e. a person losing their career or a career ending injury) may mean someone is no longer a baseball player, even though he has been one all his life. Ultimately, it is important to aid current and future former MLB players who may experience identity loss at the conclusion of their professional baseball career by providing a smooth transition from professional baseball to retirement or a new occupation. The first step in this process is to determine how MLB players perceive their athletic identity and how subsamples of high and low identity loss subjects describe their identity after discontinuation. Reporting of emotions and feelings associated with retirement from sport can be a beneficial part of the overall adjustment process (Lavalley, Gordon, & Grove, 1997). Further, account-making following a traumatic event (i.e. retirement), also has recorded benefits (Harvey, 1996; Harvey, Orbuch, & Fink, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1988). The primary purpose of this study is to examine how former MLB players perceive athletic identity. The secondary aim of this dissertation was to determine how former MLB players describe their athletic identity after discontinuation. The conceptual framework of this study provides a historical representation of how athletic identity theory was conceptualized and then applied to this present study.

Research Questions

Using a mixed-methods approach this study examines the following research questions:

1. How do former MLB players perceive their athletic identity?

Hypotheses: As suggested by research findings among collegiate and professional athletes, I anticipate that the majority of former MLB players will have high athletic identities that directly relate to the vast quantities of time that they have dedicated to professional baseball throughout their lives.

2. How do former MLB players describe their identity after discontinuation from baseball?

Study Significance

While the development and evolution of one's identity occur gradually throughout the course of one's life, identity loss can happen suddenly (Lavalley & Robinson, 2007). A loss of identity can result in uncertainty, emotional shock, and devastation (Carver & Scheier, 1992). Some cases involving former professional athletes (e.g., a person losing their career or a career-ending injury) may result in an individual who has identified as a professional athlete throughout their entire life but now finds a sizable vacuum in their psyche that only sport used to fill. While not every former professional athlete handles their career path in the same fashion, every professional athlete will eventually face the termination of their athletic career. Some professional athletes' sports careers

end by choice while others end because they can no longer perform at an elite level, or end prematurely as a result of the injury.

While individual components of athletic identity are shared across a variety of sports, baseball players share a unique experience that separates them from other athletes (Haerle, 1975). The conclusions drawn regarding athletic identity and career termination in other sports cannot be assumed as applicable to former MLB players. Some professional baseball players are drafted into professional baseball immediately from high school, and all professional baseball players endure much longer seasons than other sports, which may potentially cause some retiring MLB players to leave baseball with little else to fill their post-retirement lives. Accordingly, former MLB players are potentially vulnerable to the possible effects of identity loss at the conclusion of their baseball career (Anderson, 2004). By conducting targeted research focused on former MLB players who may have experienced athletic identity loss at the end of their professional baseball careers, will increase understanding of how MLB players perceive their athletic identity before and after retirement and use their insights to make suggestions that could help other players make a smooth transition from professional baseball to retirement or a new occupation.

Researcher's Positionality

After several years as a professional baseball player (including over one year of MLB service time), I experienced athletic identity loss at the conclusion of my MLB career. Like many current and former MLB players, my entire life

was consumed by the allure of completing my childhood dream of becoming a legendary MLB player. Although I was a baseball player for the majority of my life, I never realized the significant influence that being an MLB player had on all aspects of my existence, including my personal relationships. In short, from a very early age, baseball consumed every aspect of my life and the dominance of the sport's effect on my life persisted into adulthood as the love of baseball became a professional career.

The passion, dedication, and level of commitment required to become a MLB player are almost staggering in retrospect. I cannot even fathom the amount of hours I spent not only on the field playing the sport, but also practicing and thinking about playing baseball. This knowledge gives me the perspective of seeing the AIMS-Plus Survey as not only a series of questions about how the sport affected my social life, my thoughts, and my sense of self, my perspective allows me to understand those questions as they reflect a deeply ingrained way of life, a way of life in which baseball was the most important aspect of my world for so long, first as a youth, and then as a young adult.

Becoming a MLB player was my dream and what I worked extremely hard to accomplish for so many years of my life. The focus and dedication to baseball did not leave much time to think about what life would be without playing the sport. Of course, as all professional athletes recognize, I acknowledged that eventually I would have to retire, but the thought of

retirement was not something that I thoroughly considered. I was too focused on the game and my own personal goals of reaching the pinnacle of baseball.

For an athlete who has dedicated his life to baseball, there is really no greater feeling than making it to the Big Leagues. To be considered one of the best players in the world, to feel the excitement of playing for your team's hometown fans, to receive the royal treatment that is given to all MLB players, it is what all MLB players have worked the majority of their entire lives to achieve, and it makes all of that effort worth it. However, the physical demands of playing MLB begins to take a toll, and there is always the potential an injury will put an end to living the dream.

Sometimes the dream comes to an abrupt end in the case of injuries. To not be able to play at a professional level anymore as a result of an injury is nothing less than totally devastating. Facing the reality that my body could no longer perform at the level, I had worked so hard to reach demoralizing and even frightening. Making the decision to retire can be difficult for many people who are even at the normal age of retirement, but for a young person who is just starting their career, it is a very surreal experience to retire. Most people do not have an entire lifetime in front of them after retirement, but that is exactly the situation I found myself in when I retired from MLB.

Without a doubt, I experienced athletic identity loss after my retirement. The day I retired from the MLB was the last day that I considered myself a baseball player. My entire lifestyle changed in one moment. Everything changed

from how I worked out and trained, to the fact that I would be living in just one place and not on the road so much. I had the feeling that I was going to have to reinvent myself, and I knew that I would never feel the same way again about my athletic identity as a baseball player. I might still consider myself to be an athlete or athletic, but I am no longer a baseball player.

To come so far in the sport and find myself on the other side of my career was somewhat of a shock. It took some time for me to get my bearings and figure out what to do next. It took some time for me to reimagine what I wanted in my life, to discover new goals and ambitions, and to reinvent a new identity based on those goals that were not related to baseball in any way. Continuing my education was the path I chose to redirect my life. This path would offer challenges that would require hard work and dedication, but in a totally different way than how I had previously dedicated my life to sport. Because of my own experience with athletic identity loss, I was easily drawn to the subject of athletic identity and identity loss in professional athletes. Having had the experience myself, I wanted to get a better understanding of the experiences of other players who retired from MLB.

After many personal conversations with former MLB players throughout my adult life, I have concluded that many of these great athletes experienced athletic identity loss at the conclusion of their MLB career, but they were not aware of athletic identity loss or the potential risks associated with this loss. My hope is that this dissertation will provide insight and pertinent details that are

related to the perceived athletic identity and perceived loss of that identity in former MLB players. My position as a former MLB player gave me the inspiration and drive to closely examine the experiences and perspectives of former MLB players and their transition into retirement. I offer this research in order to provide insight into the experiences of MLB players as they transition into retirement, to examine the positive and negative aspects of those experiences, and to more fully understand how these athletes perceive their identities when they walk off the field as players and walk into their new lives, their new ventures, and in most cases, their new careers. I provide this research to better understand my experience with identity loss, and this research may potentially lead to solutions that may help future players who will eventually face the same challenges that many former MLB players have experienced. This understanding may potentially serve as the foundation for future studies related to former MLB players and athletic identity loss.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers have long demonstrated a propensity toward negative outcomes among professional athletes upon retirement. As early as the 1950s, Weinberg & Arond (1952) observed that retiring professional boxers experienced acute emotional distress post-retirement. Similar outcomes have been found among retiring athletes in other sports, including former soccer players, former Olympians, and various other athletes across a wide variety of sports (Mihovilovic, 1968; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). While these trends have

long been observed, no serious attempt to explain or understand the distress experienced by retiring professional athletes was attempted for decades.

In the mid-1980s and early 1990s, as a domain under general identity-related studies, the topic of *athletic identity* was initially explored (Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993). The notion of athletic identity was previously praised by theorists who explored how one's identification with an athlete role positively affects cognition and social roles; however, little research had explored the topic at significant depth, especially in respect to how athletic identity affects retiring professional athletes (Shavelson et al., 1976).

One of the major barriers to studying athletic identity is measurement because as a theoretical construct, athletic identity is not an obviously quantifiable phenomenon. Also, how to measure an intangible phenomenon depends largely upon the theories that undergird and explain its existence. Which factors that constitute "athletic identity" could be measured in a self-assessment tool? Accordingly, a variety of attempts to gauge how one consciously prioritizes athletic identity within the hierarchy of one's self-image were developed and refined (Cieslak, 2004). The first attempt to do this was the Sports Identities Index (SII) (Curry, 1987). Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) developed the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), which was later refined and evolved into the AIMS-Plus (Cieslak, 2004). These assessment tools, among others, allowed researchers to examine athletic identity in a quantifiable way for the first time (Cieslak, 2004).

With a fully-developed and well-defined theoretical foundation regarding what constitutes athletic identity, and several valid and reliable assessment tools that allow for athletic identity to be studied in a measurable way, it has become possible to examine corollaries between athletic identity and post-retirement distress experienced by former professional athletes (Cieslak, 2004). Previous studies have been conducted involving transitional athletic identity loss spanning a variety of different sports and sport levels (e.g., Kane, 1991; Oregon, 2010; Baillie & Danish, 1992), but MLB players have not been thoroughly studied in this respect. Due to some factors that make MLB players and their career trajectories unique in comparison to other sports, it is a worthwhile study to consider how career transitions for former MLB players are experienced pertinent to athletic identity (Owen & King, 2015).

It is the author's hope that by employing the methodologies of the latest revision of the AIMS-Plus, that new insights can be extracted regarding athletic identity and former MLB players, particularly in regards to the impact of potential athletic identity loss experiences amongst former MLB players in their post-retirement lives. While this is the primary focus of this study, as more thoroughly questions of identity (particularly regarding athletic identity loss) are addressed in a variety of contexts, an increased understanding can be cultivated pertinent to athletic identity and career transitioning in general.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study will examine how former MLB players perceive their athletic identity and how such perception may

change when they are no longer playing baseball. Using a valid and reliable survey, former MLB players were segmented into classifications of high and low identity loss (Phase I), and then subsamples of each classification were interviewed (Phase II).

Recruiting Participants

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, purposeful recruitment was enacted. To take part in this research study, participants were required to be a current member of the Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association (MLBPAA). The MLBPAA includes 7,000 members and is comprised of former and present MLB players, MLB umpires, MLB managers, MLB coaches, MLB front-office personnel, and MLB fans (retrieved from <http://mlbpaa.mlb.com/mlbpaa/about/index.jsp>). MLBPAA membership is open to former MLB players that have played in at least one MLB game (K. Sartain, personal communication, May 5, 2016). Once institutional research board approval was secured, a total of 400 participants (males) were initially recruited for this research study by a mailed recruitment letter (see Appendix A) from the MLBPAA. Two hundred and ten individuals responded to the mailed letter and contacted the primary researcher of this study to express their interest in participating in this research study. Once consent was secured, 194 individuals elected to complete the online survey. While it would have been beneficial to receive more surveys, the total number of 210 respondents provides a representative distribution of data and presents an accurate sample representation

of the population of retired MLB players in the context of this study. Considering the uniqueness of this vantage point, the relative difficulty of gaining access to this group, this sample population of the 194 former MLB players that responded to the survey provides an accurate and valuable picture of the population as a whole (Baruch & Holtom (2008). Thus it can be determined that the data collected and analyzed from the 194 surveys presented in this research provides an adequate and representative sample of the experiences of former MLB players. To avoid taking advantage of the primary researcher's conflict of interest, he only recruited participants that he has not previously met and had minimal exposure with (i.e. played one or less professional baseball seasons with when he was a professional baseball player). The mean age of the participants in this research study was 53 ± 14.4 with an ethnic breakdown of 8.2% African American, 80.9% Caucasian American, 7.7% Hispanic/ Latino American and 0.3% Other. The average age of the surveyed players was 53.51 years, and the participants played an average of 6.29 years in the Major Leagues and an average of 5.49 years in the Minor Leagues or independent baseball. Further demographics including education levels, marriage status, employment status and household income can be seen in Tables 4-5.

Table 4
*Demographics of Retired Major League Baseball (MLB)
 Survey Participants Part I*

Variable	n	%
Age Range		
30-34	7	3.6
35-44	58	29.8
45-54	43	22.1
55-64	39	20.2
65+	47	24.3
Total	194	100
Race		
African Amer.	16	8.2
Caucasian	157	80.9
Hispanic	15	7.7
Other	6	0.3
MLB Service		
0-4 yrs.	103	31
5-9 yrs.	49	54.6
10-14 yrs.	36	12.3
15+ yrs.	3	1.5
Service in Minor League		
0-4 yrs.	61	31
5-9 yrs.	106	54.6
10-14 yrs.	24	12.3
15+ yrs.	3	1.5

Table 5
Demographics of Retired Major League Baseball (MLB) Survey Participants
Part II

Highest Education Level

	<u>Currently</u>	<u>Before MLB</u>	
	n	n	
9 th -11 th	1	1	
12 th no diploma	4	4	
High school/GED	146	158	
Some college	11	9	
1+ years college	13	13	
Assoc. degree	5	3	
Bachelors	13	6	
Masters	1	0	
Doctorate	0	0	
Marriage Status	<u>Currently</u>	<u>At Retirement</u>	-
	n	n	
Single	15	34	
Married/partner	137	152	
Widowed	5	0	
Divorced	37	6	
Separated	0	2	

Instruments for Identity Assessment

The following is a description of each of the instruments and measures utilized in the research study. Please see Appendix B and Appendix C for copies of each of the measures.

There were two measures of identity utilized in this study, and they were used to assess the athletic identity of the sample: (a) The Third Version of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale Plus (AIMS-Plus; Cieslak, 2004) with five additional open-ended survey responses (Phase I; please see Appendix B), and (b) Semi-structured in person and/or Skype interview process (Phase II; please see Appendix C).

Third Version of the AIMS-Plus with five open-ended responses. The AIMS-Plus was developed based on the definition of athletic identity as being the degree of importance, strength, and exclusivity that is attached to the athlete's role that is maintained by the athlete himself or herself and his/her context (Cieslak, 2004; Cieslak et al., 2005). Such definition refers to a theoretical model of athletic identity which includes two major supporting factors: External and internal components influencing the formation of the self and social behavior of the athlete (Cieslak, 2004). The AIMS-Plus is a self-report survey that consists of 22 items that were divided into five sections.

The internal components of the AIMS-Plus represent three of the five sections of the survey and include self-identity, positive affectivity, and negative affectivity (Cieslak, 2004). The external components comprise the other two

sections of the survey and incorporate the influence of external factors (i.e. family, friends, coaches, teachers, media, etc.) upon the subject and the establishment of his/her priorities about social identity and exclusivity (Cieslak, 2004).

Each item is answered using a Likert-scale ranging from 0 to 100 (0=totally disagree; 100=totally agree), a “Role Identity Rating Scale” section consisting of five categories ranging from 0 to 100 (0=totally disagree; 100=totally agree), and a “Demographic Information” section (Cieslak, 2004). Each of the five categories concludes with one open-ended question that ends with, “How are your responses in this section different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career”? The Third Version of AIMS-Plus survey takes approximately five to ten minutes to complete (Cieslak, 2004).

In-Person or Skype Individual Semi-Structured Interviews. This assessment is a semi-structured interview that contained 24 questions, with follow-up prompts. The questions were created by utilizing the concepts from the Third Version of the AIMS-Plus survey, the literature review from Chapter Two, and the expertise of advisors at the University of Texas. Also, the research of Anderson (2012) was particularly helpful to consider in the construction of the interview questions. The research team encouraged participants to answer all 24 of the open-ended questions, but there were two questions (numbers 21 and 22), as required by the IRB were optional, because participants would have to provided information about their faith/religious beliefs. I was believed that the

questions may cause the participants to feel uncomfortable during the interview process. The primary purpose of the interviews was to collect the participant's individual answers and opinions that may have contributed to their potential identity loss at the conclusion of their MLB career.

Participants

Based on the results from phase one of the research study, the participant pool was stratified into a continuum of low to high identity for purposeful sampling for the second phase of two of the data collection.

Phase One participants. Once participants received the recruitment letter (Appendix A), they were given the option to participate in the research study by providing the primary researcher with their phone number and e-mail address. Upon receipt of the electronic contact information, the primary investigator sent an email link to interested participants to inquire about their willingness to participate in phase one of the research study; completion of the AIMS-Plus survey. Once the study's researcher received participant survey results from individual participants, he created a master key that identified all those involved by an individual pseudonym.

Procedure for identifying ten high and low identity loss participants. To select the ten high and ten low identity loss participants for phase two of the study, purposeful sampling was utilized to (or "intending to") select a subset of high and low identity participants. For phase two (i.e. as a means of selecting who will participate in an individual or Skype semi-structured interview) of the

research study, ten participants from Phase One were identified as high identity loss participants, and ten participants were identified as low identity loss participants.

To identify *ten high identity loss* participants, ten individual participants obtained all three selections from the inclusion criterion below (Appendix D):

1. The sum of scores from the 22 Likert scale survey questions on the Third Version of the AIMS Plus survey were calculated. After the identity scores from all 194 participants were calculated, descriptive statistics were used to conduct a median split, whereby the top 1/3 scores and low 1/3 scores were determined. The participants that fell into the upper one-third of all scores were eligible to proceed to numbers two and three.
2. Individuals who no longer consider themselves baseball players upon retirement from MLB was indicated in the database.
3. Responses from at least three of the five open-ended text boxes (located at the end of each of the sections: self-identity, positive affectivity, negative affectivity, social identity, and exclusivity) were coded as negative.

To identify *ten low identity loss participants*, ten participants obtained all three selections from the inclusion criterion below (Appendix D):

1. The sum of scores from the 22 Likert scale survey questions on the Third Version of the AIMS-Plus survey were calculated. After the

identity scores from all 194 participants were calculated, descriptive statistics were used to conduct a median split, whereby the top 1/3 scores and low 1/3 scores were determined. The participants that fell into the lower one-third of all scores were eligible to proceed to numbers two and three.

2. Individuals who still consider themselves baseball players upon retirement from MLB was indicated in the database.

3. Responses from at least three of the five open-ended text boxes (located at the end of each of the sections: self-identity, positive affectivity, negative affectivity, social identity, and exclusivity) were coded as positive.

Purposeful sampling was chosen for this study because it is widely utilized in qualitative research for identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the study of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Since this study aimed to include a wide variety of participants from a homogenous population, participants that vary in age and ethnicity (if possible) would be selected to potentially draw unique perspectives across the high and low identity loss platforms.

Phase Two Interview Protocol

Upon identification of the ten high identity loss participants and ten low identity loss participants, the primary investigator of the study extended an invitation to selected participants to participate in phase two of the research study. The primary investigator of the study conducted an audio-recorded in-

person or Skype interview that would last up to 70 minutes. The audio recorded in-person or Skype interview time lengths would depend on individual participant response length. All participant contact information were linked to their survey results and in-person or Skype interviews by a pseudonym, and all participants' contact details were stored in Belmont Hall (room 624 at UT Austin) behind a locked door.

Data Analysis

Data were stored using alpha-numeric codes in a single database in Excel. Data sources were electronically stored until the dissertation was approved and then audio files were destroyed, but all transcripts were retained. Data analysis was completed by phase independently and inductively through the creation of profiles.

Data Analysis in Phase One. In Phase One, these data were confirmed and reduced first through an analysis of the AIMS-Plus Survey responses of the 194 participants. Through analysis of the quantitative data and the AIMS-Plus Survey responses, the researcher was able to determine low levels of athletic identity and high levels of athletic identity in the Phase I participants. Data reduction in phase one included analysis of the AIMS-Plus scores to conclude that 39 participants experienced high loss of athletic identity and 16 participants experienced low loss of athletic identity. High and low identity loss was confirmed through the analysis of the quantitative data provided in the AIMS-Plus scores, the total sum of scores from the five open-ended responses from each section, and the analysis of the qualitative data provided in the open-ended survey question, "Do you still consider yourself a baseball player?" Participants who were among the top

third of scores on the AIMS-Plus Survey, no longer considered themselves a baseball player, and accumulated a negative total score in the open-ended responses were considered high identity loss candidates, whereas those who were amongst the bottom third of AIMS-Plus scores, still considered themselves baseball players, and accumulated a positive total score in the open-ended responses were considered as candidates for low identity loss. The data was then reduced by randomly selecting 10 participants in each category of identity loss for a total of 20 participants that were eligible for phase two of the study.

Data Analysis in Phase Two. Data analysis in phase two of the study was accomplished through the primary researcher's transcription and coding of the 20 interviews. Trustworthiness of the data was confirmed by member checking through the process of sending the transcriptions back to the participants for them to confirm that they were accurate. The primary investigator provided all 20 of the study's participants with copies of their transcribed interview transcripts, and this allowed each participant to check for accuracy in their previous interviews. The goal of the individual member checks was to give participants the opportunity to correct errors and challenge what may be perceived as wrong interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher received confirmation from all 20 phase two participants that the interview transcripts were accurate. At that time, the primary investigator of the study and one other member of the Kinetic Kidz Lab coded the interviews to find common themes amongst participant responses. Coding analyses were conducted using Nvivo software. Nvivo, a qualitative data

analysis, computer software package, has many advantages and may significantly improve the quality of research (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). Discrete statements in question were taken from the interview transcriptions and coded using an inductive approach. Interview statements that were identified as positive statements about retirement from the MLB have been designated as well as statements that were considered negative in nature. Likewise, emergent themes were identified and coded through the textual analysis of the interview transcripts. Codes were then confirmed through a peer audit.

Comparing Quantitative and Qualitative Data

As a mixed methods approach has been taken for this study, the primary researcher analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data to reach conclusions regarding athletic identity in former MLB players and the ways that former MLB players' athletic identity was impacted by retirement. Table 6 presents an overview of the types of instruments used, the data provided, and the types of analysis used.

Table 6
Instruments Used and Data Provided

<u>Instrument Type</u>	<u>Type of Data Provided</u>	<u>Types of Analysis Used</u>
AIMS-Plus Survey: Likert scale & open-ended questions	Qualitative & Quantitative	Statistical and textual analysis of coded answers
Interviews	Qualitative	Textual analysis of coded transcripts

A comprehensive picture of the athletic identity of the participants and the effects of retirement on their athletic identity was obtained from the statistical analysis of the survey (Appendix B), textual analysis of the open-ended survey responses, and the coding and analysis of themes presented in the interviews. The statistical analysis of the quantitative data from the AIMS-Plus surveys along with the qualitative analysis of the open-ended survey questions, and theme analysis of the interviews with follow-up discussions with the participants allowed for triangulation of the data. The triangulation of the data in the analysis process allowed the primary researcher to create a valid and more reliable research study.

In Phase Two, both the researcher and another member of Kinetic Kidz Lab analyzed and coded the qualitative data obtained from personal interviews of chosen participants in order to ensure validity and accuracy in the analysis of what the participants said. Member checking confirmed and validated the themes that emerged from the content of the interviews. Follow-up with the participants of the study helped to ensure trustworthiness of the data, and having more than one

researcher code, the interviews also ensured that the data was consistently coded and the themes were effectively extracted from the data.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results are organized by data source and then by research question:
(a) How do former MLB players perceive their athletic identity? and (b) How do former MLB players describe their identity after discontinuation from baseball?

The AIMS-Plus Survey measured the perceived athletic identity of former MLB players and highlighted the strengths of various aspects of these athletic identities in the categories of Self Identity, Positive Affectivity, Negative Affectivity, Social Identity, Exclusivity, and Role Identity.

According to critique of the AIMS model by the American Psychological Association in 1993, a multi-dimensional approach consisting of at least three factors (social identity, exclusivity, and negative affectivity) were needed in order to overcome and nuance the relationships previous versions of AIMS presented with a unidimensional approach linking athletic identity and outcomes related to sports participation (Brewer, Boin & Pepitas, 1993; Cieslak, 2004). These categories have been subsequently expanded to the six categories delineated above, resulting in a multi-dimensional model that thoroughly considers the complexity of an athlete's experiences, particularly as a number of forces interrelate both cooperatively and antagonistically in establishment of athletic identity (Cieslak, 2004). The results of Cieslak's (2004) research demonstrate "that the measurement of athletic identity can be strengthened by using a... model that includes external components (i.e. social identity and exclusivity) and internal components (i.e., positive affectivity, and negative

affectivity) of identity formation” (p. 175). The results presented below, therefore, account for both the impact each category examined by AIMS-Plus has upon individual athletes while also recognizing that together, and an average of scores can account for a general sense of one’s athletic identity.

Results of Role Identity on the AIMS-Plus Survey. When asked to rank the importance of their roles related to family, friendships, athletics, religion, and romance, the participants demonstrated the strongest role identity association in the importance of family. The average rating for the question, “The importance of family,” was 98 on a 0-100 scale, which provides evidence that players may place a substantially higher importance on their family role in healing from identity loss.

Religion was the next most important role identity category as the average rating for “the importance of religion” was 88, followed closely by the “importance of friendships” at an average rating of 87, and “the importance of romance” with an average rating of 76. The average rating of “the importance of athletics” was 64, and finally, the “importance of academics” held the lowest average ranking in the role identity category at 52. In this section of the AIMS-Plus Survey, the participants revealed that family identity was the most important role in their lives whereas their role identity related to athletics was second to last in importance. These results suggest how retired MLB players may perceive their athletic identity in relation to other areas of their lives.

The results of the Role Identity category on the AIMS-Plus Survey provides evidence that former MLB athletes may place a low importance on athletic identity in relation to other important identity roles in their lives. Ultimately, these results were consistent with prior research (Horton & Mack, 2000; Krylowicz, 2000) that established a correlation between high athletic identifiers and the degree of identity foreclosure experienced by the athlete when transitioning out of professional sports.

In the following section, results are presented for the AIMS-Plus Survey; average Likert scores were calculated for each question by totaling the scores of all 194 participants for each question and then determining the overall average Likert score for that question. For example, an average score of approximately 97 for the question indicates that the participants on average gave a high Likert score rating for the question (ranking the question on the scale as a 9 or 10) resulting in an overall high score for the question among all the participants. This overall average score was used to determine if in general the participants as a group ranked a particular question as highly important (80,90, or 100) on the Likert scale, moderately important (50,60,70) on the Likert scale, or of low importance (0,10,20,30, or 40) on the Likert scale. Obtaining an average score for each question allowed the researcher to see how the participants ranked the question as a group. Though some may have ranked the score higher or lower than other participants, the overall average score of the question on the Likert scale presents a view of the overall relevance of the topic of the question to the group as being

very important, moderately important, or of low importance. This method can be compared to obtaining a class average on a test. An average grade in a class does not show the highest or lowest grades, but obtaining this average allows the teacher to see how the students fared on the test as a group.

Results of Self Identity on the AIMS-Plus Survey. When asked to rank their self-identity in relation to athletics, the AIMS-Plus Survey results demonstrated that on average, the participants expressed moderate identification as an athlete as well as moderate interest in goals related to sport or career ambitions related to sport. A moderate interest indicates a score on the Likert scale that is neither high (90-100) nor low (0-30). Moderate would indicate a response on the Likert scale in the middle of the range of 0-100. When the scores of all the answers to the statement, “I consider myself an athlete,” was totaled, the average ranking for this statement for the overall group was approximately 66 on a 0-100 scale. This indicates that on average, the participants did not typically respond with a high or low number on a scale of 1-100. The average answer of the 194 participants fell in a range of approximately 66, neither high or low, which provides evidence that self identity may play a role in healing from identity loss.

Considering that these participants are former professional athletes, each of whom had achieved the status of being considered among the best players in the world in their sport, this value of 66 demonstrates that the participants may no longer have a strong perception of themselves as athletes. If the majority of the

participants still considered that they are still athletes, the average score for this statement might have fallen in the 80-100 range.

Although the scores for perceptions of athletic identity were only moderate (approximately 66) for the retired MLB players, the average total score for all 194 participants when asked to rank the statement, “Being an athlete is an important part of who I am,” was slightly higher at approximately 71. This suggests that although the participants had only a moderate (ranking lower than 80-100) perception of their identity as an athlete, they may have considered athletic identity to be a somewhat important aspect of their self-identity. However, goals related to sport and careers related to sport may not have been considered a strong aspect of the former player’s self-identity as the average score on a Likert scale of 0-100 for the statement, “I have many goals related to sport” was only 51, and the average value for the statement, “Being an athlete is who I am and I want to make a career out of sport,” was also only 51. Since 50 is in the middle of the Likert scale score of 0-100, and is neither high (90-100) or low (0-20), the researcher determined that 50, falling in the middle of the Likert scale, indicates a moderate identification with these statements. These results demonstrate that when averaging the total scores for each statement in the Self-Identity category of the AIMS-Plus Survey, the former MLB players only moderately self-identify as athletes, and they only moderately focus on goals and careers related to sports. Again, a moderate score was analyzed as an average score that falls somewhere in the middle of the 0-100 Likert scale.

Results of Positive Affectivity on the AIMS-Plus Survey. Positive Affectivity on the AIMS-Plus Survey corresponds with the extent to which participation in sports positively affects a player's life. Positive affectivity can take a number of forms, and depending both upon the personality and experiences of the participant, the sources of positive affectivity can vary. Prior research into athletic identity has found that many athletes express positive relationships with experiences related to sport participation and commitment, goal orientation, enjoyment related to the sport, both individual and team-based performance, and the social aspects and relationships developed through participation in a sport (Curry & Weaner, 1987; Brewer et al., 1993; Horton & Mack, 2000). Coakley (2001) summarized the categories of positive affectivity amongst athletes in terms of sport for the action, personal involvement in the action, being challenged, reaffirming friendships, and for enjoyment or having fun.

In this section of the AIMS-Plus Survey, the 194 participants expressed moderately high positive associations with how participating in sports positively affects their identities and lives. The term "moderately high" was determined by calculating average Likert scale scores that were in the 70 to 80 range. In this category of the survey, the highest average score was in response was to the statement, "When I participate in sport I am happy," at an average rating of approximately 76, followed by, "My participation in sport is a very positive part of my life," at an average rating of approximately 76. These scores may suggest

that the retired athletes are still positively affected by their participation in sport, and they may have a positive perception of their participation in sports despite their discontinuation from MLB. Further, the average rating of the statement, “I get a sense of satisfaction when participating in sport,” was also moderately high at approximately 75, and the statement, “I feel good about myself when I play well in practice or competition” received an average rating of approximately 73. These results indicate that the former MLB players who participated in this study may perceive their athletic identity as having a moderately high positive affect in healing from identity loss.

Results of Negative Affectivity on the AIMS-Plus Survey. Negative Affectivity on the AIMS-Plus Survey relates to the extent to which participation in sports negatively affects an athlete’s life. According to Ryska (2002), negative affectivity “represents the extent to which an individual experiences adverse emotional reactions to undesirable outcomes related to sport” (p. 113). While the majority of studies related to the AIMS-Plus measurements of negative affectivity focus on current athletes and how negative outcomes impact their psychological well-being while still active in their sport, it can be expected that retired athletes might continue to demonstrate negative affectivity particularly if their retirement was initiated on account of poor or declining performance or other career goals were not met. While some might expect that negative affectivity would score lower amongst retired rather than active athletes,

negative experiences in the sport that led to a premature ending of one's career could have a longer-lasting impact for some former athletes.

The results in this category indicate that the 194 participants may have a moderate to moderately low perception of their participation in sports negatively affecting their daily lives. Answers that were ranked 40 or 50 were considered moderately low to moderate on the 0-100 Likert ranking scale. The response to the statement, "I would be very depressed if I were cut from the team and could not compete in the sport," had an average rating of approximately 49, the lowest average for all the statements in this category. This might suggest that these retired MLB players do not perceive their exit from the sport as having negatively affecting their lives. Further, the response to the statement, "I feel bad about myself when I play poorly in practice or competition," received a moderately low average rating of approximately 50, potentially indicating that these former players did not place a great deal of significance on poor performance in sport.

In response to the statement, "I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sports," the retired players demonstrated moderate negative affectivity with an average rating of approximately 51. Similarly, in response to the statement, "I feel badly when I fail to meet my athletic goals," the retired MLB participants demonstrated a moderate negative affectivity as the average rating for this statement was approximately 52. The average rating in this category suggests the retired MLB players might have a moderate to

moderately low perception of being negatively affected by poor performance in sport, suggesting that for the participants of this study, their current athletic identity may be moderate or moderately low as it pertains to their negative feelings about their sport performance.

The researcher suggests that the moderate to moderately low scores in this category could be related to the fact that the retired players have already experienced injuries and dismissal from their teams, have already reached their goals as professional athletes, and therefore no longer perceive a strong negative affectivity in relation to their perception of themselves as professional athletes. That said, disparity in scoring exhibited by individual participants may suggest that average scores might not adequately account for the role negative affectivity plays for some retired professional MLB players. Further study needs to be conducted in order to evaluate negative affectivity amongst former professional athletes based on factors such as one's perception of having attained or failed to attain his career goals, or whether poor performance led to early retirement as opposed to declining performance after a lengthy, mostly successful career.

Results of Social Identity on the AIMS-Plus Survey. In the responses to the survey statements in the Social Identity category, the participants rated their perceptions of athletic identity in relation to their social connections. This category demonstrates how the former MLB players currently view themselves as athletes when considering the perspective of others. The examination of participants' social identity was of particular interest due to the team nature of

baseball and the significant amounts of time in comparison to other sports that MLB players spend with their team members during their careers (Warriner & Lavallee, 2008). Turner's (1975) hypothesis that identity develops along a continuum about one's membership in social groups suggests that a significant disparity between one's baseball-oriented social identity during an MLB career would exhibit a sharp decline or undergo radical change post-retirement.

In this category, participants gave the lowest ranking to the statement, "I participate in sport for recognition/fame," giving the average rating of approximately 21. This rating was categorized as low importance (0-20) as it falls at the lowest end of the scale. The low rating indicates the participants might place a low importance on their social identity as a recognized, famous athlete. The 194 survey participants were spread across a wide range of MLB service time; some participants only played MLB for a week or less, whereas some participants played MLB for 15 or more years. It is reasonable to suggest that the players who spent more time in MLB received more recognition and fame; however, the low score on the importance of fame and recognition demonstrates that there might be little emphasis on fame in relation to athletic identity for the majority of these former players. This suggests that the retired players' perceptions of athletic identity as it relates to fame might be low regardless of the length of time they played in MLB.

Additionally, the participants gave low score responses to the statement, "It is important that other people know about my sport involvement," for an

average rating of approximately 39. Again, the low score average response to this statement may indicate that the former MLB players do not currently have a high athletic identity association with the social significance of their sport. It is not extremely important to these former players that others know about their former success in their chosen sport, and this might demonstrate more of a disconnect from their athletic identity as former MLB players. Responses to the statement, “My family expects me to participate in sport,” were slightly higher with an average rating of approximately 48, again potentially demonstrating a low level of athletic identity in relation to the participants’ social identity within their families. Respondents gave moderate ratings for the statement, “Most of my friends participate in sport,” for an average rating of approximately 53, potentially denoting that the retired players still have social interactions with former teammates or do tend to moderately associate their perception of athletic identity with other people who participate in activities related to sport.

Finally, for the Social Identity category of the AIMS-Plus Survey, participants gave the highest ratings in response to, “Other people see me as an athlete,” with this statement having an overall average rating of 66. This is a particularly interesting finding because the participants might have a slightly higher than moderate perception of athletic identity in relation to how others perceive them, which suggests that while the former MLB players may have experienced a decrease in their athletic identity upon retirement, they recognize that they are probably still viewed by others as an athlete. Because the skill and

dedication required to become a MLB player is substantial, retired players may recognize that the general population would naturally view them as athletes regardless of their status as retired players.

Overall, the results from the Social Identity category of the AIMS-Plus Survey indicate that the retired MLB participants of this study may place little emphasis on social recognition and fame in relation to sport, and while others may still view them as athletes, their own perceptions of athletic identity tend to be moderate to low in regards to their social status and relationships.

Results of Exclusivity on the AIMS-Plus Survey. The Exclusivity category on the AIMS-Plus Survey indicates the degree to which participants rank participation in sport and thoughts about sport as the most important aspect of their lives. Several studies have shown a positive correlation between social identity and exclusivity suggesting that lower scores in terms of social identity, presuming one finds identity in social relationships outside of the sport, would also predict low scores in the exclusivity category (Cornelius, 1999; Smith, Hale, & Collins, 1998). While previous studies have demonstrated this relationship amongst active athletes, it can be expected that a declining social identity related to a sport post-retirement should also correspond with low levels of exclusivity. The results found a correlation between the moderate-to-low results regarding social identity, as addressed in the previous section, and exclusivity to be discussed below.

In the category of Exclusivity, the participants exhibited the lowest scores on the AIMS-Plus Survey. In response to the statement, “Sport is the *only* important part of my life,” the lowest average rating for all of the survey questions was calculated at approximately 16. This very low value might indicate a low perception of athletic identity in the retired MLB players surveyed, as baseball is not the only important part of their lives. Similarly to the previous low score rating for the importance of sport in their lives, participants gave a low average rating to the statement, “Sport is the *most* important part of my life,” as the average rating to this statement was approximately 27. Based on the experiences of the primary researcher himself and the interview responses of the participants in Phase Two of the study, it is understood that former professional baseball players had to put an extremely high importance on their sport early in their athletic careers in order to reach the level of expertise to successfully become a member of the elite group of athletes that make up the MLB. Responses to the open-ended questions on the survey and responses to interview questions provide evidence for the level of commitment to the sport that is required to become MLB players and will be discussed in a later segment of the results section.

It might be concluded that former players no longer consider baseball the most important aspect of their lives, and therefore the perception of their athletic identity in relation to the importance of baseball is very low. Further, in the Exclusivity category of the AIMS-Plus Survey results, the participants

demonstrated a relatively low average rating of approximately 40 in response to the statement, “I typically organize my day so I can participate in sports,” indicating that participation in sport may be a low priority in their daily lives and thus their perception of athletic identity in relation to exclusivity and their daily plans may be considerably low. Again, from the researcher’s personal experience, and as indicated in the Phase Two interview responses, it is known that MLB players must organize most of their days around practicing and playing baseball in order to reach and maintain the elite status of a MLB player, thus these results may demonstrate a low perception of athletic identity in retired MLB players in terms of how much of their lives now revolve around their sport.

The highest average rating in the Exclusivity category was in response to the statement, “I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else.” In response to this statement, the average rating was a moderate 54, potentially indicating that their perception of athletic identity in relation to how much thought they put into sport is moderate after retirement from MLB. As explained in earlier segments, the term moderate is used to indicate that the average Likert score was neither high (90-100) or low (10-30). Personal experience and interview responses suggest that Exclusivity ratings could be much higher for current MLB players.

The Exclusivity category of the AIMS-Plus Survey demonstrates the participants may have a low perception of athletic identity in relation to the importance of sport in their day-to-day lives and might have a moderate

perception of athletic identity in terms of their sport dominating their everyday thoughts.

Descriptive Statistics on AIMS-Plus for Low Identity Loss and High Identity Loss

Participants who were classified as low identity loss ($n = 16$) and high identity loss ($n = 39$) were compared on each of the AIMS-Plus subscales as well as on AIMS-Plus full-scale scores. Table 7 provides descriptive statistics on those variables for each group. Also included in that table are the results of one-way between-subjects ANOVAs used to compare the two groups. Low and high identity loss participants differed significantly on all subscales of the AIMS-Plus as well as on full-scale AIMS-Plus scores, with high identity loss participants consistently showing higher AIMS-Plus scores than low identity loss participants. This is not a surprising finding since study participants were classified as high identity loss based in part on their high AIMS-Plus scores (top third of the distribution) and as low identity loss based in part on their low AIMS-Plus scores (bottom third of the distribution).

Table 7
 Descriptive Statistics on AIMS-Plus Subscale and Full-Scale Scores for Low Identity Loss and High Identity Loss Participants and Results of One-Way Between-Subjects ANOVAs

AIMS-Plus Dependent Variable <i>p</i>	Low Identity Loss				High Identity Loss				Significance Tests	
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Md	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Md	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
Self-Identity <.001	16	10.63	10.00	10.10	39	91.15	97.50	13.98	435.48	1, 53
Positive Affectivity <.001	16	30.00	30.00	12.88	39	95.96	100.00	10.71	382.20	1, 53
Negative Affectivity <.001	16	15.63	7.50	25.60	39	75.71	80.00	19.20	91.03	1, 53
Social Identity <.001	16	18.25	10.00	21.66	39	66.15	70.00	16.72	78.11	1, 53
Exclusivity <.001	16	18.25	10.00	21.66	39	54.92	60.00	25.52	25.55	1, 53
Full-Scale Scores <.001	16	17.50	9.00	23.39	39	75.30	76.36	12.84	207.65	1, 53

Participants who were classified as low identity loss ($n = 16$) and high identity loss ($n = 39$) were also compared on each of the role identity rating scales.

Table 8 provides descriptive statistics for those variables for each group. Also included in that table are the results of one-way between-subjects ANOVAs used in comparing the groups. The groups did not differ significantly on any other role identity rating scale.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics on Role Identity Rating Scales (Family, Friendships, Athletics, Academics, Region, and Romance for Low Identity Loss and High Identity Loss Participants and Results of One-Way Between-Subjects ANOVAs

AIMS-Plus Dependent Variable <i>p</i>	Low Identity Loss				High Identity Loss				Significance Tests	
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Md	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Md	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
Family .929	16	97.81	100.00	5.47	39	97.95	100.00	4.96	0.008	1,53
Friendships .548	16	89.75	100.00	12.79	39	87.44	90.00	2.92	0.366	1,53
Athletics <.001	16	43.44	40.00	22.34	39	80.87	85.00	19.34	38.845	1,53
Academics .792	16	59.06	65.00	28.76	39	56.92	55.00	26.62	0.070	1,53
Religion .648	16	89.69	100.00	16.78	39	86.41	100.00	26.36	0.211	1,53
Romance .473	16	78.13	92.50	4.96	39	82.67	90.00	19.47	0.522	1,53

A closer examination of the results of each open-ended identity classification category is presented in the following sections.

Classifying Identity Loss Through Coded Open-Ended Responses

At the end of each of the five identity categories on the AIMS-Plus Survey, the participants were asked the open-ended response question, “How are your responses in this section different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?” Participant responses that were indicative of a negative response were coded as negative (-1), whereas responses that were indicative of a positive response were coded

as positive (+1). Participants that indicated no change in their response were marked null (0). Table 9 presents an overview of the results for Classifying Identity Loss by the AIMS-Plus Survey categories of Self-Identity, Positive Affectivity, Negative Affectivity, Social Identity, and Exclusivity.

Table 9
Classifying High and Low Identity Loss on the AIMS-Plus Survey Open-Response Questions.

<u>AIMS Plus Factor</u>	<u>Self-Identity</u>	<u>Positive Affectivity</u>	<u>Negative Affectivity</u>	<u>Social Identity</u>	<u>Exclusivity</u>
Did your identity change over time?	(# yes/no) 100/94	(# yes/no) 50/144	(# yes/no) 72/122	(# yes/no) 81/113	(# yes/no) 133/61
How did it change?					
Pos = +1	Pos = 4	Pos = 8	Pos = 6	Pos = 9	Pos = 10
Null = 0	Null = 94	Null = 144	Null = 122	Null = 113	Null = 61
Neg = -1	Neg = 96	Neg = 42	Neg = 66	Neg = 72	Neg = 123

^a Each discrete statement collected from the open-ended response questions were coded as positive (given a value of +1), Null (given a value of 0), and negative (given a value of -1). The sum of the codes is expressed by factor.

Participants who were classified as low identity loss (n = 16) and high identity loss (n = 39) were compared on each of the AIMS-Plus subscales as well as on AIMS-Plus full-scale scores. Table 10 provides descriptive statistics on those variables for each group. Also included in that table are the results of one-way between-subjects ANOVAs used to compare the two groups.

Low and high identity loss participants differed significantly on all subscales of the AIMS-Plus as well as on full-scale AIMS-Plus scores, with high identity loss

participants consistently showing higher AIMS-Plus scores than low identity loss participants. This is not a surprising finding since study participants were classified as high identity loss based in part on their high AIMS-Plus scores (top third of the distribution) and as low identity loss based in part on their low AIMS-Plus scores (bottom third of the distribution). Sample quotes from each category by ranking (-1,0,+1) used to determine high and low identity loss are presented for each category in the following sections.

Self-Identity Identity Classification on the AIMS-Plus Survey. In Phase One of this research, 194 participants responded to the question, “How are your responses in this section ('Self Identity') different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?” The results demonstrate that a majority of the participants marked questions related to self-identity lower in comparison to how they would have ranked the same questions early in their MLB careers. The following quotes offer a sampling of responses that were coded -1, indicating the participants’ acknowledgment that their scores were lower at the time of taking the survey as they would have been early in their MLB careers.

I've moved past sports as a career and moved on. It helped shape me, but does not define me anymore- decreased.

Yes, because my identity, priorities, and perspective have all changed and shifted back now. Baseball is what I did, not who I am and I no longer look to baseball to define my worth or value.

I am not an athlete anymore, it was a major part of my life, but I scored very low on these answers now.

As these responses coded -1 might indicate, these former players have “moved past sports as a career” and their self-identity as baseball players “helped shape” them but does not “define them anymore.” These retired athletes might feel that their “identity, priorities, and perspective[s]” have “changed and shifted back now” and they “no longer look to baseball” to define their “work or value.”

These responses depict a clear picture of how the perceptions of athletic identity related to self have changed over time for the participants of the study. Overall, 100 of the participants (approximately 51%) indicated that their answers for this section were decreased from early in their career, potentially demonstrating a high level of identity loss in the classification category of Self Identity. Over half of the 194 participants experienced a loss in Self Identity as athletes after their retirement from MLB.

On the other hand, 94 (approximately 48%) of the participants stated that their answers were the same as they would have been early in their MLB careers. A sample of quotes that were coded 0, for no loss of self-identity, are represented below.

My responses are just like they were back in the day.

If you would have asked me to answer these questions during my MLB career I would have provided you with these exact responses.

I have self-identified as an athlete since I was a kid and a professional baseball player since I signed professionally and I am still in that same mind frame.

Slightly less than half of the participants maintained an aspect of their self-identity related to their involvement in MLB. As the sample quotes demonstrate, many of the men surveyed have “self-identified as an athlete’ for so long that they remain in the “same mind frame” as they did early in their careers.

Positive Affectivity Identity Classification on the AIMS-Plus Survey.

In response to the question, “How are your responses in this section (Positive Affectivity) different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?” the results demonstrate that 42 of the participants (approximately 22%) marked questions related to Positive Affectivity, or the degree to which participation in sport affects their lives positively, lower in comparison to how they would have ranked the same questions early in their careers as MLB players.

Sample responses that were coded -1 in relation to positive affectivity are as follows:

I must admit I was very happy when I played, but these scores are a lot lower in this stage of life.

My positive affectivity was almost exclusively tied to on the field performance early in my career. Later, after marriage and three kids, I had something more than sport to derive positive affectivity from.

Now that I am no longer playing, it has a different effect. When I played, its ingrained in you to base your emotions and feelings off of how you "performed". Now that I am in coaching, I still like competing but its different b/c its rewarding seeing others develop and overcome certain hurdles... meaningless.

As these responses indicated, approximately 22% of the former retired players surveyed had the perception that their identity related to positive affectivity and sport was no longer a significant aspect of their lives. In some cases, the participants found “something more than sport to derive positive affectivity from,” and while most were “very happy” when they played, in some cases positive affectivity as relates to athletic identity became “meaningless” when they left the field as players themselves.

When it comes to athletic identity in relation to Positive Affectivity, more retired MLB players indicated that their perception of athletic identity remained the same as 144 participants (approximately 74%) expressed that their answers for this section of the AIMS-Plus survey were the same as they would have been early in their MLB careers. Some of the responses given by the majority of the study participants that were coded 0 (no change) are as follows:

Probably the same. The difference is now it's a part of overall well being (exercise, healthy choices), verses a definition of self.

There was nothing better than being a big leaguer to me, I think the same way right now as I sit here today.

I feel great when I played and when I still play the game, there is not a change (just knowing that I played at the highest level makes me smile).

Baseball was the biggest part of my life back then and I still feel the same now even though I can't play anymore.

I'm going to say the same mindset. I still find the same amount of gratification and satisfaction when participating in sports, now on a recreational level only.

A majority (74%) of the former athletes surveyed expressed that they feel the same about how their participation in sport in general and their participation in MLB in particular continues to have a positive impact on their lives. Many of the participants expressed in various ways that sport still plays a significant role in their lives whether it be in sport's contribution to a sense of their "overall wellbeing," or whether just knowing they were part of something as significant and elite as MLB still provides them with the "same amount of gratification and satisfaction" today. These results might suggest that these former athletes may still perceive their identity as athletes as a positive influence in their lives.

Negative Affectivity Identity Classification on the AIMS-Plus Survey.

In response to the question, "How are your responses in this section (Negative Affectivity) different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?" the results demonstrate that 66 of the participants (approximately 34%) marked questions related to Negative Affectivity, or the degree to which poor performance in sport negatively affects their lives, lower in comparison to how they would have ranked the same questions early in their careers as MLB players. Some of the responses given that were coded as -1 were as follows:

I would say that early in my life I would have been bothered by a lack of performance but now I realize that I am not the same athlete as I was when I was younger and don't get discouraged anymore about my diminished skills.

There is def truth in the older you get, life has a way of teaching you wisdom. Now that I'm a little older and out of playing, I can take it in stride better and relax more. Early in your career, I was living from a short sided, small window of opportunity so there

was more urgency. Plus, being a performance based career, that only adds to it.

I would say that early in my life I would have been bothered by a lack of performance but now I realize that I am not the same athlete as I was when I was younger and don't get discouraged anymore about my diminished skills.

I'm 44, and though I still have a lot of fun participating in men's league baseball, I'm also aware that my body isn't going to keep up with the young men I play against. I'm happy to still be able to compete, but success on the field now doesn't define me anymore.

These responses show that approximately 34% of the participants may “realize” that they are “not the same athlete” as they were early in their MLB careers. There often was a sense of acceptance as many of the participants recognized that they would not be able to perform at the elite level as they aged. These results indicate that 34% of the participants may place less emphasis on their sport performance than they did early in their MLB careers.

When it comes to athletic identity in relation to Negative Affectivity, 122 (approximately 63%) of the retired MLB players indicated that their perception of athletic identity remained the same in relation to negative affectivity when they perform poorly in sport. A sample of the open-ended responses that were coded as 0 to indicate that answers were the same as they would have been early in their MLB career are provided below.

*I am the same today as I was back when I was a ball player
I never got down on myself for not making a team or anything like that.*

*I put everything I had into this game, I responded the same.
Baseball was everything when I played, I'm about the same way now too.*

I played hard, shouldn't get down on myself....i feel how I did back then.

Leave it all on the field-- always felt like this and still think like this.

As these responses indicate, a majority of the participants may still perceive that their athletic identity relation to performance can affect them in a similar way, whether that be negative or positive. Perhaps some of the respondents had the attitude to “leave it all on the field” early in their careers and this perception is maintained in their current perceptions. Many participants may have viewed the negative affectivity of their athletic identity in the same way.

Interestingly, some of the participants did indicate (approximately 3%) that they may have scored higher (+1) on negative affectivity post retirement as the following responses demonstrate:

Early in my career, I was told no many times but felt I could work hard enough to reach my goals. My attitude now increased because of these experiences.. I like when people doubt me...

I loved sports but realized early that it was like the stock market. You can't over react from one day to the next and you are not defined by the results. I am extremely competitive (grew up in a competitive family) and still love to win but don't take things to bed with me like I did then.

When injured, released, or performed poorly during my career I would sometimes get down... now I use those types of negative experiences as positive fuel to set goals and strive for other opportunities.

These responses demonstrate the crossover quality theme that will be discussed in the following chapter. Some of the former players may have ranked their scores higher in negative affectivity because they are “extremely competitive” in the

first place and due to the fact that their athletic identities are an aspect of their ambition personalities that natural lead them to “set goals and strive for other opportunities.”

The results in the open-ended Negative Affectivity response suggest that many of these former athletes may still perceive their identity as athletes as a strong influence in their lives, yet a majority of the participants are no longer negatively affected by their sport performance in the same way they would have been early in their MLB careers. Some former MLB players continue to feel the same impact of negative affectivity as they did before, and others used aspects of the qualities that relate to negative affectivity as crossover personality traits to fuel their drive and motivation to push forward in their lives.

Social-Identity Classification on the AIMS-Plus Survey. In response to the question, “How are your responses in this section (“Social Identity”) different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?”, 72 (approximately 37%) of the 194 participants indicated that their responses were currently lower in the Social Identity Classification on the AIMS-Plus Survey than they would have been early in their MLB career. Sample responses that were coded -1 are as follows:

I'm comfortable with myself and have other challenges in life now...meaning not as much.

During my career, it was 100% that people identified me as an athlete. I have gotten away from that now and rarely talk about my career unless it is brought up by someone else or is relevant to a conversation, it's around 40% today.

Oh yea.. way down. Most of my friends now are just regular people holding down regular jobs. While most know that I was an athlete it does not drive the relationship because most of my identity comes now from my children activities and my hobbies.

In some cases, the participants now feel very disconnected from their athletic identity in relation to their social lives, often because they have found other areas of greater importance such as their social identity as it relates to their “children and hobbies.”

On the other hand, in comparison, 111 participants (57%) noted that they would have ranked the questions the same early in their careers as MLB players.

Responses coded 0 for no change are presented below.

The answers for this section would be virtually identical whether being considered early, or at the end of my career.

I have and had these responses for as long as I can think back actually.

I didn't play baseball for any special award or anything like that just because I loved doing it and it's all I knew- no change.

Again, it is interesting to note that a small percentage of the participants (approximately 10%) did indicate that their scores are higher in the social-identity category than they would have been early in their career, and those responses that were coded +1 seemed to indicate the participants' continued involvement in the sport in some capacity as the following quotes demonstrate:

My career now is a baseball development facility so its obviously important for people to know about it. My career in the game can be leveraged for what I am doing now. I would def say, early on in my career and life, my dream of getting to the big leagues started off as pure reason b/c i loved the game. But then I realized it was a

source of acceptance, adoration, and recognition and it went up from there after retirement to where it is today.

Because it was my life and my living depended on my success, I was proud of my life in sport, and being recognized was a normal occurrence. It was positive then but even more so now.

Clearly, continued involvement in the sport may potentially have an impact on the former players' perceptions of how athletic identity relates to their social identity post retirement.

Results in this section of the AIMS-Plus Survey may indicate that a majority of the former MLB players surveyed for this research continue to have a strong Social Identity as athletes even after their retirement from MLB. Despite the team nature of the sport, the relationship one establishes with his peers while active in the sport has some identity carry-over into one's concept of athletic identity in social interactions post-retirement. These results could indicate that the participants' athletic identity is still strong in relation to how others see them and based on the fact that these former baseball players still maintain important social relationships that revolve around sports. It could also be explained in part by many players intentionally making efforts to continue friendships with former teammates and other individuals within the MLB community after retirement. Undoubtedly, electronic networking and social media platforms make retaining relationships even across vast geographical distances possible which could, in turn, serve as a mechanism to preserve the social component of one's athletic identity. Another possible indication demonstrated in these results could be that

athletes who reach the level of professional play retain their athletic identity in the eyes of their family, friends, and peers.

Identity Classification by Exclusivity on the AIMS-Plus Survey. In response to the question, “How are your responses in this section (Exclusivity) different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?”, 133 of the participants (approximately 69%) indicated that their identity has changed in how they responded to questions related to Exclusivity in sport, or the degree to which thoughts about and participation in sport dominates their daily lives and schedules. Sample responses coded -1 to indicate the perception that the scores were lower in the Exclusivity category are presented below:

Baseball was my life then and my performance was crucial to how I could support my family. Although I have never had a job outside of baseball I look at it much differently now. I care most now about my family (not my career) and outside of my broadcasting job I spend most of my time with them instead of chasing the dream.

I love to watch sports still and but other things occupy my time such as kids events (most are sports related) and making sure the house is running smooth so my wife and kids can go about their jobs or responsibilities without too many distractions. It was more about myself and working on baseball skills when I was a player, not the case now.

Now sports are replaced with marriage, mortgage, and kids. We organize around kids activities.

During participation it was almost a total life encompassment. Everything was focused on participation, preparation. It is important to transition to this same level of concentration in other activities after professional participation, but for me it's tough to do sometimes.

Overwhelmingly, results in this category demonstrate the participants viewed their participation in baseball to be “total life encompassment,” but they find now that their identity relies more on “marriage, mortgage, and kids.”

In comparison, only 61 of 194 participants, or 31%, stated that they would have answered the questions in the Exclusivity category the same as they would have early in their MLB careers. Some of the responses coded 0 for no change can be seen below:

It's just how I am and it's just the same as it's always been.

I answered the same then and now, I love baseball, what else can I say.

Baseball had a huge part of my life and still does, so its equal.

Baseball will always be very dear to me, my feelings are just like how they were then.

Exclusivity is around the same as when I was a young man.

As these responses show, certain participants seem to retain a strong sense of athletic identity even after retiring from their sport. They view sport “just the same as it’s always been,” and because “baseball will always be very dear” to them, their “feelings are just how they were then.”

When it comes to athletic identity in relation to Exclusivity, many more retired MLB players indicated that their perception of athletic identity was lower in terms of participation in sport as being is the most important aspect of their everyday lives. In this classification category, fewer participants expressed that their answers for this section of the AIMS-Plus survey were the same as they would have been early in their MLB careers.

The results in this section suggest that a majority of these former athletes may perceive their athletic identity in terms of Exclusivity as much lower than they did early in their careers as MLB players. It can be assumed that the amount of time that MLB players must dedicate to sport during their professional careers would affect exclusivity levels in athletes before and after their retirement. The participants of this study indicate that their perceptions of their athletic identity in terms of Exclusivity were higher early in their MLB careers opposed to their perceptions of athletic identity in relation to Exclusivity at the time of their participation in this AIMS-Plus survey. Therefore, more participants experienced high identity loss in the classification of Exclusivity for the purpose of the current study. The high level of identity loss may indicate that a majority of the participants of this study place a lower importance on sport and thus their perception of their athletic identity is significantly lower than it was early in their MLB career.

Athletic Identity as a Baseball Player

Results to Open-Ended Response, “Do you still consider yourself a baseball player, please explain.” Perhaps one of the most important questions asked on the survey of participants in this study was the open-ended question, “Do you still consider yourself a baseball player, please explain?” Giving the former MLB players the opportunity to offer an explanation of their response to this question gave the researcher more of an understanding of how the participants perceive their athletic identity in relation to baseball and if or why their perceptions have

changed. Though some of the participants simply answered yes or no, many of them took the time to thoughtfully respond to this question in ways that demonstrate the evolution of their perceptions of identity over time.

Initially, the researcher calculated all the responses that were “yes” and “no” and found that 57 (approximately 29%) of the study’s participants do still consider themselves baseball players, whereas a total of 137 (approximately 71%) responded that they no longer think of themselves as baseball players after their retirement. According to these numbers, a majority (137 or approximately 71%) of the participants of this study experienced identity loss as a result of their discontinuation from MLB. However, a closer look at the details provided in their open-ended responses tells a more nuanced story about how these former MLB players currently perceive their identity. By coding the responses to demonstrate various levels of identity loss and identity change, the researcher was able to gain a better understanding of how the identity of the best baseball players in the world develops and changes over time.

Coded Identity Categories After Retirement. Coding the answers to the question, “Do you still consider yourself a baseball player, please explain,” revealed common themes on how the retired MLB players perceived their athletic identity as baseball players and allowed many of them to reflect on and express their perceptions in more detail. It became clear that there were five distinct categories that the responses fell into and they are as follows:

- Once a player always a player
- I'm a former/retired baseball player.
- I'm a baseball coach now.
- Now that time has passed.
- No, I am . . . a new identity now.

As the following sample responses demonstrate, several of the participants still had a strong identity as baseball player, and some indicate a very strong identity remains in tact:

Once a baseball player, always a baseball player.

Yes! I worked for many years and extremely hard to play in MLB. I love baseball, I understand baseball and baseball is in my blood. I have been and always will be a baseball player.

Yes. I play men's league, and baseball is STILL the activity/profession I know most about. I know and can still do more baseball related things than 99% of the population, which is still a source of pride for me.

Yes. When people talk to me about my broadcasting, I always say, "I don't consider myself a professional broadcaster... Just a player talking about the game."

Yes, I have always been a ball player and always will be... who would think different?

Yes I am! I am still affiliated with baseball because I love the game.

Yes, as much baseball as I've played in my life, I'll always be a baseball player!

Always will, I grew up a baseball player and reached me childhood dream, ill always be a baseball player and I am proud of that fact.

Of particular interest is the response, “Yes, I have always been a ball player and always will be . . . who would think different?” This response potentially shows a very strong sense of identity in the respondent, and conveys a sense that his identity as an athlete has never been in question. The more detailed responses convey a similar perception that being a baseball player is just part of who these men are as people. Many noted that the amount of time and effort that went into being a baseball player gives them the perception that they will always be a ball player, even if they have long since retired. Another participant mentions that he is still “affiliated” with baseball and this affiliation or connection to the sport and love of the game has solidified his athletic identity as a baseball player. Others note that the hard work and prestige that comes with being a MLB player creates a lasting sense of identity related to the sport.

The respondents in this coded category convey that the level of expertise attained in becoming a MLB player creates a lifelong identity related to the sport. For example, one participant notes that he “can still do more baseball related things than 99% of the population,” and this fact might be a sense of pride for him. Indeed, being a part of an elite class of professional athletes is a point of pride that is discussed throughout the participant responses, yet overall a relatively low number of participants still retain their identity as baseball players. However, the 29% of the retired athletes who do still consider themselves players are confident that their hard work, dedication, and love of the sport throughout

their lives entitles them to perceive themselves as baseball players even if they no longer play professionally.

The following responses show participants who have a more nuanced perception of their identity as baseball players. Of the 194 participants surveyed, 16 (8%) suggested in their response that they maintain their identity as a baseball player but now they perceive themselves as being a “former or retired” player.

I consider myself a former baseball player.

No, I consider myself a former player. While being a baseball player will always remain part of who I am, I strive not to let it be all that defines me.

Yes, I will always consider myself a baseball player, now it's just former. That's who I was, that's what gave me everything I have today.

I still consider myself a Major Leaguer, yes I do, because it is something they will never take away from me. As baseball, if I am not playing I don't hold on to that tag so for now, I say no.

Not anymore, now I am a retired baseball player and officer.

No, after your retirement you cant be a baseball player, you gotta turn into a retired baseball player so that the current players get some respect.

These responses may suggest that a degree of identity loss may have occurred with these retired athletes, although they have not completely lost their perception of themselves as baseball players. Some of the responses show a mixed response of both yes and no, for example the response, “I still consider myself a Major Leaguer, yes I do, because it is something they will never take away from me. As baseball, if I am not playing I don't hold on to that tag so for

now, I say no.” In this response, the participant explains that his perception of being a Major League player has not changed though he does not “hold on to that tag” as a baseball player any longer.

Similar to the positive responses, these players retain a sense of being a former baseball player due to the level of skill and knowledge they acquired to become a professional player. These results suggest that 8% of the participants maintain a perception of themselves as former players, thus their athletic identity has diminished. Nonetheless, some players who still identify themselves as former players retain an aspect of their identity as former players.

Again, as demonstrated in the positive responses, the following sample responses may suggest that playing sport at the highly competitive and professional level seems to help former players maintain perceptions of athletic identity in relation to baseball. Of the 194 men surveyed, 16 (8%) of the participants noted that they now consider themselves a coach in their response to the question, “Do you still consider yourself a baseball player, please explain.” These responses are of participants who answered that they no longer consider themselves baseball players; however, they indicated that now their perceptions of identity have shifted to the role of “coach.”

Yes- I retired and decided I should do new things with my life and then wanted to become a college baseball coach so I did.

No, now I am a baseball coach and baseball instructor.

No, now I tell people I am a coach and retired if they ask me what I do.

No I do not-I consider myself a coach now.

Interesting question but I would have to say no I do not consider myself a baseball player and that's because I am a coach now and that is my job. My job was to execute pitches and now its to make sure my pitchers execute their pitches.

The sample responses presented here show participants whose perception of athletic identity has evolved to be a baseball coach rather than a baseball player. Another point of interest is the response that indicates that the participant both still considers himself a baseball player and now a coach. He writes, “Yes—I retired and decided I should do new things with my life and then wanted to become a college baseball coach so I did.” This response shows a dual perception of being both a baseball player and a coach. The participants mention being a coach as a new identity that is an offshoot of being a baseball player. While these participants generally do not consider themselves as baseball players, remaining connected to the sport through coaching seems to continue to be an important aspect of their identity in relation to sport.

It is interesting to note that 8% of the participants indicated in their response that they perceive themselves as being former baseball players and the same number of participants (16 or 8%) indicated that they perceive themselves as being coaches. This data may reveal that these former players still have a connection to their athletic identities in relation to baseball, though those perceptions are not as strong or have changed since their retirement.

The following sample responses demonstrate a common theme in the participants’ perceptions of their athletic identity after retiring from Major

League Baseball. Of the 194 participants, 78 or 40% responded that they no longer consider themselves baseball players.

Nope. It's part of my past but I no longer am a player.

No, the day I retired I knew that I was moving forward and leaving that part of my life behind.

Not anymore. I did for at least the first 4-5 years after playing. It took me a long time to not identify myself as a baseball player anymore.

No, I gave that life up once I retired and wanted to spend more time with my family.

No, when I quit the final time I realized it was all over for me in this lifetime.

No I do not because I can't perform like I did when I was a young ballplayer and like the professional baseball players on tv now.

No/ a baseball player puts on the team uniform to play baseball most days of the week.

This is a hard question for me to consider, but I have to say no. Why? I don't prepare myself to be a baseball player anymore.

Many of the responses presented might indicate that there was a perception identity loss immediately upon retirement as can be seen in the responses, “No, when I quit the final time I realized it was all over for me in this lifetime,” and, “No, the day I retired I knew that I was moving forward and leaving the part of my life behind.” These participants express a common perception that retirement resulted in sudden identity foreclosure for many of the former MLB players. As the results also reveal, many players expressed that due to the fact that they no longer compete or put on a “team uniform,” they feel that they can no longer call

themselves baseball players. Other participants expressed that it took some time for them to give up their perceptions of themselves as baseball players as is revealed in the response, “Not anymore. I did for at least the first 4-5 years after playing. It took me a long time to not identify myself as a baseball player anymore.” In this participant’s response, a gradual loss of identity is shown. Though the perception of athletic identity loss was not sudden, as was the case in many of the participants, there is still the perception of a gradual loss of identity over time.

These “no” responses are a strong departure from the participants whose perceptions were, “Once a player, always a player.” It is difficult to speculate as to why some participants maintained a strong perception of themselves as baseball players. It could be a difference in personality type or a difference in experiences before and after retirement. However, the results of this study do demonstrate conclusively that 40% of the former players of this study experienced identity loss after retirement. Some players experienced sudden athletic identity loss, whereas others lost their perceptions of being a baseball player over time.

An additional 28 participants (14%) acknowledged that they no longer consider themselves baseball players, but in their response they mentioned that they currently have new identity perceptions of themselves. These are participants that noted a new identity other than that of “coach,” and the

responses were coded as, “Now I am . . . a new identity.” Samples of responses coded, “Now I am a . . . new identity” are as follows:

No because I'm a husband and business owner which is more important to me.

Nope, I consider myself a dad, husband, and coach these days and a retired mlb player.

No, I look at myself as a father and husband first.

Not now-I am many other things now instead of a ball player first.

I am not a baseball player now, I am a father, a husband, and a firefighter.

No because I'm a husband and business owner which is more important to me.

Negative I am a charter fishing captain that played MLB at one point in his life.

No I do not because I view myself and my life as a firefighter- and although baseball was a major part of me it's just been a long time since I was a baseball player.

No.... I consider myself a business man now and that's where I put all of my career efforts.

Some of the responses coded as “new identity” were coded for mention of moving on to a new life or career path, or the mention of family life as it became clear in the responses that an emphasis was often placed on the former player’s identity as family men and this theme seemed to emerge as one of the most important aspects of their identity perceptions. For example in the response, “Nope, I consider myself a dad, husband, and coach these days and a retired MLB player,” the participant could be ranked as being in the “retired player” or

“coach” category as well; however, the emphasis and placement of “dad and husband” early in the response may indicate that these roles are at the forefront of this respondent’s shift in identity perceptions and thus the response was marked as, “New Identity,” to offer a more nuanced view of the changes in the perceptions of the participants.

These responses offer an interesting perspective of the participants of this study who recognized a shift in their identities after their retirement from MLB. Though these participants no longer consider themselves as baseball players, they indicate that they have evolved in their perceptions of identity to now view themselves primarily as fathers, grandfathers, businessmen, or in other capacities related to their new professions. A total of 28 participants (14%) acknowledged an evolution of their identity perspectives that are shift away from their athletic identity, yet these responses indicate that their shift in perspective to a new identity seems to be an important aspect of acceptance and moving on past their experiences as professional athletes. This shift in perspective may be interpreted as a valuable coping strategy for MLB players faced with their inevitable retirement from their careers as professional athletes. Though identity foreclosure has taken place for these participants, there seems to be a healthy recognition that a new perception of identity beyond athletic identity is beneficial as retired players begin to adjust to a new life without baseball as the primary identifying characteristic of their personality and lives overall. These results are encouraging for professional athletes who face the difficult challenge of

redefining their self-perceptions as athletes. Though the transition is difficult, there is the possibility of moving past an all-encompassing athletic identity that has dominated the early stages of a player's life and career in sport. While the participants in this study often indicated the pride and sense of accomplishment they felt by becoming part of the elite group of professional athletes that make up MLB, many participants also expressed a sense of acceptance after their retirement; some also noted that the perceptions that made them successful in baseball could be considered cross-over qualities that propel them forward in their new careers. This cross-over quality theme emerged in survey data and will also be further explored in the results of the interviews.

To summarize the results presented in this section, overall 57 (29%) of the participants surveyed responded generally that yes, they do still perceive themselves as baseball players and thus their athletic identity was preserved following their retirement from professional baseball. On the other hand, generally speaking, 137 (71%) of the participants expressed that they do not perceive themselves as baseball players any longer as they indicated in their response to the survey question, "Do you still consider yourself a baseball player, please explain." These statistics demonstrate that a majority of the retired MLB players surveyed for this research study did indeed experience athletic identity loss. However, a closer look at the open-ended responses to this survey question has provided the researcher with a more in-depth look at the perspective of these former players' perceptions of their athletic identity following their retirement.

Some retired players, 28%, retained their sense of athletic identity in relation to baseball by stating that they still consider themselves baseball players, whereas 8% specified that they perceive themselves as former players and another 8% identify now as coaches rather than baseball players. Further, 40% of the participants revealed a strong perception of loss of athletic identity, with some of the responses indicating a perception of sudden athletic identity loss, whereas 14% of the responses show identity loss with a perception of development into a new identity unrelated to sport. By breaking down the responses into more nuanced categories, the researcher has been able to see a more complex picture of the participants' perceptions of identity following their retirement. Using these more nuanced categories, the researcher was able to examine relationships between the participants' years of service in the MLB and their career paths following their retirement. Additionally, analyzing age ranges in relation to the identity categories presented in this section provided interesting observations about the perceptions of athletic identity among retired players. These comparisons were done to provide an even more in-depth analysis of the participants and their perceptions over time and in relation to the number of years that they devoted their lives to playing baseball professionally. The analysis of these results may provide some additional insight into the perceptions of the athletic identity of the retired players surveyed and how those perceptions have changed after discontinuation, and thus help to more fully answer the research questions of this study. In the following section, results will be presented to show

the relationships between perceptions of identity in relation to years of MLB service, age, and career paths following discontinuation.

Athletic Identity as Baseball Player in Relation to Years of Service in Major League Baseball. The primary purposes of this study were to examine the participants' perceptions of athletic identity and how those perceptions have changed after retirement. It was important to consider whether or not the amount of time spent as professional athletes seemed to have any impact on the athletic identity of the former MLB players surveyed. The researcher initially hypothesized that the majority of former MLB players would have higher perceptions of athletic identity that directly relate to the amount of time that have spent in the Major Leagues. Thus far, the data presented in the results section suggest that many of the participants maintain their perception of athletic identity in some areas, as shown in the role identity sections of the AIMS-Plus survey, while they seem to lose aspects of their perceptions of athletic identity in other areas, for example as it relates to their perceptions of themselves as MLB players.

The participants were asked, "Approximately, how much MLB service time did you accrue during your MLB career? Please specify number of years and/ or days in your response." The average service time for the 194 participants was 6.29 years; however, some responses were as low as 1 week, or in one case, only one day of service, whereas the longest tenure reported is 16 years and 86 days. From just one day to almost 17 years is a substantial difference in time

spent playing Major League Baseball for the participants of this study, and this demonstrates that the participants of this study represent a good sample of retired players, some of which who have devoted a substantial amount of their lives to professional baseball, and others who only experienced a short amount of time playing in the big league.

A total of 36 participants (19%) served less than one year in MLB. The largest number, 66 participants (34%) spent approximately one to four years playing MLB, and 49 (25%) spent five to nine years in the MLB. A total of 37 participants (19%) played baseball professionally for ten to fourteen years. A total of six participants (3%) spent more than 15 years playing MLB.

Of the 36% of total participants who spent less than one year in the MLB, only 8 (4%) still consider themselves to be baseball players, whereas 28 (14%) of those in this group no longer perceive themselves as being baseball players. In contrast, 17 participants (9%) who spent one to four years in the MLB still consider themselves baseball players, whereas 49 (25%) do not. The same number of retired players, 17 (9%) who played for five to nine years still consider themselves baseball players. On the other hand, 32 (16%) of the players in the five to nine years group no longer consider themselves players. In the category of ten to fourteen years of service, 11 retired players (6%) still consider themselves to be baseball players in comparison to 26 (13%) who do not. Finally, in the 15+ years category, 4 (2%) of the retired players still consider themselves to be baseball players in comparison to the 2 (1%) who no longer do. It seems the

largest variation in responses seems to occur in players that served less than one year to four years and those who played the longest.

In all cases, more players reported that they no longer consider themselves baseball players in every group except the 15+ years of service group. It is not surprising that more participants who played MLB for over 15 years total still viewed themselves as baseball players than those who did not. It is logical to assume that dedicating so many years to service in any profession may solidify a person's perceptions of identity in relation to that particular career path. This may be true in other professions that are not related to athletics; however, the mental and physical demands of playing sport professionally over the course of more than a decade may also have a lasting impact on a person's perception of himself as a life-long athlete in many cases, though this is just a reasonable speculation based on the researcher's own personal experience as well as the analysis of the various data collected in the course of this study. In contrast to the players who spent the most time in MLB, in the less than one-year category there was a dramatic difference in the number of players who no longer consider themselves baseball players and those who do still consider themselves baseball players. This could suggest that those who played MLB for less than a year experienced a greater sense of identity loss as a result of retiring early in their careers.

Across the board in the other groupings of participants based on years of service, more former players do not consider themselves baseball players than

those who do. This suggests that years of service may not have as much of an impact on the athletic identity of the participants of this particular study generally speaking. The results presented here do not seem to suggest that the majority of the participants surveyed who played an average of just over six years of professional baseball had a significantly stronger perception of their athletic identity as baseball players. The hypothesis presented that athletic identity would be stronger in participants who spent more years in the MLB is somewhat verified by the number of participants that still consider themselves baseball players in the 15+ years group of participants as more of those former players still perceive themselves as baseball players than those who do not. More research is needed to determine if there is a significant relationship between years of service and athletic identity and is beyond the scope of the present study.

Athletic Identity as Baseball Player in Relation to Age at the Time of Survey. The age range of the participants of this study varied from the relatively young age of 32 to the oldest participant who stated, astonishingly, that he was 95 years of age at the time of his participation in this study. It is insightful to be able to gain the perspective of both such a young former MLB player and also to get insight into the perspective of a 95-year-old former MLB player. It is quite interesting to note that the oldest participant of this research study gave the response, “Once a baseball player, always a baseball player.” In the case of this elderly gentleman, the passage of time did not have a negative impact on his perceptions of himself as a baseball player, though his overall score on the

AIMS-Plus was only 850. While his overall athletic identity ranked low according to the AIMS-Plus, he maintained his perception of being a baseball player even after so many years of retirement. However, it should also be noted that this particular participant played in the MLB for four years and also stated that he had a long career in MLB after his retirement, which could also explain his continued view of himself as a player for life. In contrast, the youngest participant of the study was 32 years of age at the time of the survey, spent only a total of 12 days in the MLB, was dismissed due to injury, and no longer considers himself a baseball player. It is an interesting comparison of two individuals and their experience. On the one hand, a player that has only recently retired no longer considers himself a baseball player, whereas a participant that played more than seven decades ago still perceives of himself as having the athletic identity of a MLB player. Although the oldest participant's scores in some areas of the AIMS-Plus survey were low, nonetheless, he rated some of the questions at 10 demonstrating that in many areas he still strongly identifies as an athlete many decades after he achieved his peak performance as a MLB player.

The average age of the participants of the study was 53 years at the time of the survey. A total of 7 participants (4%) were 30 to 34 years of age; 56 (29%) were between the ages of 35 and 44; 46 (24%) were between the ages of 45 to 54; 41 were between the ages of 55 and 64 (21%), and a total of 44 participants (23%) were 65 years or older at the time of the survey. The variation in age range demonstrates a relatively even sampling of former players at different stages of

their lives post-retirement. This data provides an overview of how the participants perceive their athletic identity in relation to baseball at various stages of retirement.

In the 30-34 age range, only one participant still considers himself a baseball player, whereas three viewed themselves as former players, two no longer see themselves as baseball players, and one indicated on the open-response question that he now sees himself in a new identity other than a baseball player. Overall, in this category, the youngest participants no longer consider themselves baseball players and this indicates a high perception of identity loss for these former MLB players. In the 30 to 34-age range, 14 (7%) of the participants continue to identify as baseball players, whereas a larger number of 26 (13%) no longer consider themselves baseball players. In the 30-34-age range, 5 participants (3%) considered themselves former baseball players, 4 (2%) stated that they now see themselves as coaches, and in this category, 7 (4%) of the participants noted that they see themselves in a new identity after their retirement. Across the board, the numbers are similar in each category, with the exception of the coaching category. In the 45 to 54-years age group, more participants identified as coaches rather than baseball players. This could possibly be due to the fact that these former players may have at this time in their life spent more time coaching baseball than actually playing professionally.

Proportionately, more former players in the 35 to 44 years age range stated that they no longer consider themselves baseball players indicating a high

loss of athletic identity as baseball players for this age group. Additionally, more participants in the 55 to 64-years age group indicated in the open-ended responses that they have now taken on a new identity of some kind that is separate from their identity as athletes and former baseball players. These results could indicate that at this time in the participants' lives, they have accepted their retirement and moved on to other careers, and as such, have lost their perceptions of athletic identity while gaining new perceptions of identities in other areas of their lives. In the case of these results, it seems that time does seem to have an impact on the players' perceptions of their athletic identity. In some cases, time may provide more opportunities to explore new careers, come to terms with the inevitability of retirement, and provide a more mature vantage point on experiences as a former professional athlete. To gain a better perspective of how these former MLB players moved on to other ventures after their retirement from professional baseball and determine if there were any interesting correlations between identity perceptions and career choices, identity loss as a baseball player was compared to the participants' stated professions. The results of this analysis are presented in the following section

Employment of Former Major League Baseball (MLB) Participants after Retirement. As part of the survey, participants were asked, "Did you secure employment (at any point) after your final retirement from your MLB career? If yes, please specify the type(s) of job(s). If none, please write, 'None.'" The results were then coded according to the career path that the participant

mentioned in the open-ended response. In some cases, more than one career path was taken. In these instances, the participant was marked as gaining employment in more than one area.

Interestingly, the results show that many of the retired participants chose to go into similar career paths following their retirement. Overall, the most common type of employment secured by the participants was, not surprisingly, coaching baseball in some capacity with a total of 42 or 22% indicating that they became a coach after retirement. Likewise, many of the participants (17%) indicated that they became business entrepreneurs after retirement, opening their own businesses in various areas such as the restaurant industry, plumbing, clothing, and custom home building. Many of the participants gained employment within the MLB after retirement, 13%, whereas another 13% entered a sales position of some sort with 6% of the total participants entering the real estate business.

The 12% of the participants who continued on as baseball coaches and 10% of the participants who continued careers in the MLB still had perceptions of themselves as being baseball players, whereas the business entrepreneurs seemed to lose their identity as baseball players in that only 6% still identified as baseball players. Similarly, those participants who went into sales or real estate also expressed a higher incident of identity loss as baseball players, with 13% in sales and 5% in real estate responding that they no longer consider themselves as baseball players.

Again, the data presented here shows that participants who continued their careers as coaches or gained employment in MLB in some capacity, tended to still consider themselves baseball players or baseball coaches, opposed to the participants who went into other professions. The results seem to show that former players who started their own business ventures had a slight tendency to mention their new identity as businessmen indicating that their careers as entrepreneurs led to stronger perceptions of identities not related to athletes or baseball. The overview of career paths in these former athletes might suggest that in general, the participants who remained involved in the sport perhaps experienced less identity foreclosure than their counterparts who left the sport entirely. This data suggests that continued involvement in baseball could lessen the strain of identity loss in these former athletes. It may also be suggested that those who went on to have successful careers in other fields did experience athletic identity loss, yet they were able to reconstruct their identity around other successful ventures. These results may lend credence to the idea of cross-over qualities that will be further examined in the interview results and explored as a major theme in the discussion following the results.

Results of Coded Interviews in Phase Two

Having presented the results of the AIMS-Plus survey, as well as offering a close analysis of the coded open-ended survey questions, it is time now to delve into Phase Two of the results of this research study and present the insights obtained in the interviews of the 10 high identity loss and low identity loss

participants. The 20 interviews were coded to determine common themes among the responses of the interviewees. Initially, the researcher looked for negative and positive comments related to playing in and retiring from the MLB, but the inductive coding of the interviews revealed more nuanced themes as was the case in the coding of the open-ended survey responses. As such, the data presented here offers a rich narrative of what these individuals experienced at the time of their retirement and during the days and years that followed. The overall result of this picture lends insight into how retirement resulted in athletic identity loss and reveals the aspects of the former athletes' lives that inspired or comforted them during the transition into retirement. The interview responses also reveal the advice these former MLB players would give to other athletes who must also eventually face the end of their athletic identity as active players while forming new identities in their new lives and careers post retirement.

Each node provides a unique look into the former players' perceptions of their identity and careers as professional athletes. There were a considerable number of positive comments related to the participants' experience as MLB players and their perspectives as retired players. A sample of comments coded as "positive" are presented below:

Oh well I am proud of everything that I did and proud of playing. I think it was a good career and I can tell you that retiring wasn't a tough thing for me because of the coaching.

The best part for me... the best part for me was being treated like a Major Leaguer and the great teammates that I played with. Those guys were like brothers to me and we had fun together. We

kept in touch for many years after we played because we had a close connection when we played and we all knew that too.

I had all the skills and the baseball I.Q to set me up for the coaching side. It was perfect for me to do coaching and I loved it. I became a coach and ran away with the opportunity.

It's certainly a huge part of who I am and in sales it's a great way... a great way to have people remember you. You know, I use my career in baseball as simply that, a way that people can remember me.

I just wanted to think positive and think like I could... I mean think positively for the future without being a baseball player now.

I think I'm in a better place now that I... I am removed a few more years from playing, time makes the transition easier for me and some of the other guys I know say the same thing, as I'm sure you can relate to.

The positive comments given by the interviewees depict various themes that emerged time and time again and reveal a complex picture of bittersweet nostalgia, love and support of family, and successful pursuits beyond retirement from MLB.

The comments that were coded as negative also reveal the struggles these players faced upon their retirement and the stark realities of sudden athletic identity loss that occurs when professional athletes must walk away from the game that has defined their lives. Following are samples of the comments that were coded as negative from the participants interviewed.

It was really a hard thing for me to overcome.

I was sad that I was optioned and felt like I needed more of a chance to show 'em what I got...

That's simple, when the game is over for you and you have to move on. It has to happen to everyone and everyone deals with it

different. A lot of guys... it's hard to leave because they love it and had so much into Into the game.

It's just not the Major Leagues for me... so it's been difficult in some ways.

I wouldn't say that I have all the way adjusted here today. Even when you're a free agent and have some MLB time, you can still make a solid living... like I did for many years. My income today... it's about how I was making in my early free agent times... so I have had to adjust and make differences in my life and my family's life. It's not always easy man... reality isn't always fair.

I was.... I was definitely saddened by that decision.

It's hard to leave something that is and was so important to you in your life... and something that you live as a lifestyle for so long.

It's not easy to turn the page so quick...

Again, the sampling of comments presented help to illustrate a picture of the themes that emerged in the interviews. The participants expressed feelings of deep sadness and hardship in the early days of their decision to retire. In some cases, the choice was not their own as their careers were cut short as a result of injury or dismissal from their team. The realization that they would no longer play the sport that had been such an important part of their lives for so many years was painful even though many of the men expressed that they acknowledged at the time that retirement was inevitable.

Another negative aspect of the MLB experience that was conveyed in the interviews was how hard the sport was both physically and mentally. The responses show that being injured and suddenly released from the team was often a shock even when retirement is to be expected. Players who were forced into

retirement early felt that they did not get their chance to show the world what they had worked so hard to achieve. Some expressed feelings of bitterness and a sense of being lost. The former players often stressed that being on the road and away from their spouse and family was one of the more grueling aspects of their career in the MLB. When reflecting on their decision to retire, many of the interviewees said that returning home to their families helped alleviate the pain of walking away from the field as a professional athlete. Nonetheless, as the responses indicate, adjusting to a new lifestyle and new careers was a very difficult process that involved both identity foreclosure as well as the arduous task of redefining their identity often in an entirely new field unrelated to sport.

The interviewees also reflected on how much the game of baseball meant in their lives. Responses coded “Importance of the Game,” reveal just how much these former players had invested in the sport throughout their lives and in their careers as professional athletes. A sample of these responses can be seen below:

I felt this way because I had so much inside me... so much passion inside me that wanted to do nothing else other than play professional baseball. It's a part of your whole life, a part of your DNA.

Back then baseball was extremely important for me. It was my full identity and how everyone knew me.

Baseball always meant a great deal to me... it was everything to me growing up and my talent was always undeniable.

Baseball was in my blood... I loved baseball... I enjoyed it and I was good at it. I always said I was going to grow up and make a career out of playing baseball and it was... I was proud to do that for all those years.

Basically I gave so much time and put so much into it, it consumed the majority of my life. Moving here, moving there, being here, being there, it

was my life pretty much. About everything was influenced by my decision to play professional baseball.

I knew myself Larry as a baseball player and that's how I made living, made money to pay my bills and live. Baseball was one of the most important areas of my life... after my faith, kids, and wife.

It was big, as big as life itself. Everything I did was about being a baseball player and then later on a professional baseball player.

Playing ball, being a baseball player was in my blood... it was me, my identity. It was the only career I dreamed about as a kid and up through my teenage years... it was it, everything.

The strong language in the comments above presents the magnitude of impact that baseball had on the lives and identity of these former players. Baseball was in their “blood,” part of their “DNA.” It was their “full identity,” their “everything,” and “consumed a majority” of their lives. Their sport was the most important aspect of their lives besides “family and God.” As one participant stated, MLB players “eat, sleep and breathe to play baseball.” These words paint a picture of a lifestyle and love of sport that is more than likely only experienced by a select few of elite athletes. All professional baseball players know that retirement is inevitable, yet these interviews show that the total commitment to the sport and a complete immersion in the athletic identity of a professional player is not even questioned for the men that reach the MLB. Though retirement, and ultimately identity foreclosure, is inevitable, a love for the game overrides any doubts when pursuing a viable career in professional baseball. This sense of total dedication left little room for thought much less preparation for any job training unrelated to baseball as the sample comments presented below reveal.

The job training... I wasn't in any job training.. I never considered it because I was so.... So crazy about doing my training and getting into MLB and sticking there.

And the job training, that's another thing I didn't get into it... none of that either.

Job training... my parents would tell me do different things for them and I went to school and I played sports.... That was it. Job training was not part of it.

Job trainings?... I wasn't doing any other job trainings than playing baseball... that was enough of a job for me to do everyday all day.

Haha... job training, I didn't know anyone that did job training during their career... either you want to be a baseball player and you give it your effort or you did something else in the world.

I focused on being a MLB player and that was the focus that I needed to make it into professional baseball and MLB.

Of all the 20 interviews, only one participant mentioned being somewhat prepared for a career outside of baseball. Otherwise, participants often laughed to think of the idea of job training before or during their MLB career. There was simply not enough time, energy or interest in anything other than playing at the elite level required of a professional ball player. The intensity of training and the time devoted to practicing and playing as well as traveling is the life of a MLB player and it leaves little time for anything else. Most participants interviewed seem to suggest that this was just an accepted way of life because “baseball was . . . priority,” as “either you want to be a baseball player and you give it your effort or you did something else in the world.” Again, it becomes obvious in these responses, and from the personal experience of the researcher, that a total

focus on playing sport professionally was required to play at that level. Upon retirement, these former players were faced with the option of continuing in the sport in some capacity or reinventing themselves entirely in discovery of a new career path. An aspect of this difficult decision was revealed in the responses of the interviews when asked if they still watch MLB after their retirement. A sample of these responses can be seen below:

I don't go to any games anymore, I just don't have time for that right now.

It's just not the same, I was just that guy.. or one of those guys down there playing last year... I don't watch baseball right now... I will again one day though, I just don't know when though yet.

I think I felt this way because I really had a love for the game but I knew that love would be different as a fan and not a professional player.

I'll still watch a few games a season but my kids aren't really that interested in baseball so I gravitate towards their interests and you know...

Aw no... when I first retired I didn't want to watch... I missed it too much then... but it's different when you get older.

*I say that should be me, sh**. No, I'm cool, I watch and think about the times I was out there and it brings me back to some good memories.*

Did I? Well I gave myself a little time get over the whole thing... a few years, it just takes time for guys I think.

As a scout and manager in the minors, I've watched plenty of games into retirement. I am used to it, it's great to watch the rising talents in baseball have their chance and play to their abilities. All guys that play in the minors have their time, I had mine, now they are having theirs, so it's good for me to be around and see these guys develop.

Responses presented here reveal a spread of emotions in these former players when they think about watching MLB after their retirement. Some participants who have continued in careers related to baseball express that they “watch games all season” as that is part of their job, while others “don’t go to games anymore” because of a lack of time or due to the fact that other aspects of their lives, generally family matters unrelated to baseball, take up more of their time now. Other aspects of the responses reveal a sense of bitterness or pain associated with watching the sport. Some expressed that it took some time to watch again, while others state that they no longer watch because it’s not the same or that it may take some more time to feel like watching MLB again. In this case the results may show that timing is everything or time heals all wounds in players who have experienced athletic identity loss after their retirement from MLB.

When asked what advice these former players would give to current and future MLB players, the interviewees offered practical suggestions for players during their tenure as professional athletes. Further suggestions were made pertaining to the decision to retire and the factors one should consider when doing so. These words of wisdom can be seen in the responses coded as “Advice.” A sample of these responses is presented below:

I’d say... I would say play as long as you can. A job out in the real world is a heck of a lot different... but you have to see it in your own head.. it’s all about their way of life and what they want and what they need too.

Every man is going to do what’s the best for him and the family he has. Don’t make that decision one day just because you struck out five times or you had to give up three homeruns... think it through,

make a decision that you can wake up to everyday for the rest of your life... so it's a wise decision.

Think about doing some coaching.... I decided to do coaching and it was a great way for me to end my career and show youngsters how to play the game of baseball. Baseball is always going to need coaches and who better than Major Leaguers is what I always thought.

There's no where better... just if you have to, then you can do it. But if you don't have to, hold off and play. The real world isn't all rosy, it can be a strange place at first. Play ball baby.. it's what you were born to do, just play ball baby.

Oh brother, make sure it's worth it, the real world can be cruel... and it's not fun.

Do what it is that makes you happy... if it makes you happy to retire then go ahead and retire.... MLB doesn't have a shortage of players that want to play this game, the game is always getting bigger and bigger and getting more fans and good players everywhere. If it makes you happy to retire, retire, do something else and make it for yourself in whatever else you do.

There are a lot of jobs in this world.... If you spend all of your time going somewhere or doing something that you don't like, work to do a job that you will like. We have a lot of options in this life and spending so much time to do something that you don't want should be a last case scenario.

Hmm...persistence and dedication are keys... figure out where you want to go and work your tail off until you get there.

Give yourself a plan to fall back to... it will make your retirement less stressful and help you get on your feet quicker than if not. That is the best advice that I can give a player that may be retiring soon.

The game is constantly churning out newer and younger players. You have to see this and be ready for it to happen to you. It happens to some quicker than others and I wanted to make myself know that.

I should have prepared and did some research about after my retirement, it just didn't happen that way. I think you get so consumed by your baseball career that you forget that it will end one day and you don't think about it. I'm not sure if you don't want to think about it or you just think it will come easy to you or what, you just don't do it.

Leaving Major League Baseball is a tough one, if that's what you're thinking, do it and see what's on the other side. But remember, the grass isn't always greener on the other side either.

You have to be honest within yourself, if you can do that, then you're a step ahead of many people out there.

I wanted to do something positive, help out others, but man it just was something I had to take time, be patient... let things develop.

The advice that is given by the participants interviewed sheds light on several aspects of retirement that any professional athlete may benefit from. Several of the former MLB players expressed the idea that retirement from the sport is an accepted part of playing ball professionally. Many expressed acceptance and recognized even earlier in their careers that the physical demands of the sport would eventually lead to retirement from this career path and that a lot of life would still be left to live after baseball. Family life was frequently cited as an important aspect of the decision to retire. Many of the players interviewed found that entering a baseball-related profession, or maintaining a connection to the sport through one's children, or through coaching, helped them cope with identity loss after retirement and offered that path as a bit of advice to other players approaching MLB retirement. Even for those whose decision to retire was voluntary, they indicated that for the most part, the decision was difficult, and emphasized retirement is a personal choice which should be considered

based on the individual's own experiences and expectations for life beyond baseball. In some cases, the participants advised that players should continue in the game as long as possible, while others suggested that forming a plan before retiring could help alleviate some of the stress associated with leaving the game and losing the identity that comes along with playing the sport at a professional level. The comment "persistence and dedication is key" lends credence to the notion that perhaps some of the qualities that made these athletes great baseball players could be usefully crossed over into their lives and careers after retirement. Time and time again, the participants interviewed conveyed messages about the importance of family and the importance of perseverance in the face of adversity. Many recognized the need to accept the cycle of young players replacing the old—a cycle that had benefitted them when they were once young players. They also expressed that while many of them did not do so sufficiently, planning for a future that may or may not include baseball as a part of everyday life after retirement is key to a successful transition beyond one's years in the sport. One should at least consider, or attempt to envision, what his life might look like after he retires from professional athletics. Summaries of the themes that emerged in the interviews are presented in the following section.

Summaries of Themes from the Interviews

Coding the interviews allowed the researcher to better understand some important themes relative to the experience that led up to retirement and the perceptions of the former players after their professional career as baseball

players had ended. While these themes do not exhaustively account for every topic elicited by the interview questions, they were common topics that seemed to echo throughout a number of the respondents' comments. Isolated comments, made by one or two individuals, were not thematically coded. Rather, the themes that tended to emerge frequently and regularly, thus likely representing a significant cadre of the retired MLB population, were noted and coded accordingly. These general themes are summarized here.

Advice. The participants wish they had a chance to provide advice to current MLB players, as they hoped that they would think carefully about their personal situations before making a decision about retirement and to make their decisions without being influenced too much by outside voices. In the advice given, the retired players feel that retirement is a personal decision that needs to be made by the player himself based on the careful consideration of their unique circumstances. At the same time, however, many players who saw their careers end early on account of injury or poor performance were likely to relate to their transition out of the sport more negatively than those who left the sport consciously after thinking it through over time.

Religion. When it comes to religion, the former MLB players seemed to maintain the same level of religious practice during their MLB career and after their retirement. For those who had a strong sense of religious faith before and during their MLB career, that strong sense of faith helped them through the difficult transition into retirement. Conversely, those who did not have a strong

religious commitment before their MLB careers did not often mention religion as being a significant factor in helping them cope. A couple of interviewees mentioned faith being a significant factor in helping them with their retirement, but these were the men who had strong ties to religion beforehand. Some of the men noted that they became more involved in religious practices as they aged.

Watching MLB. Not surprisingly, many of the retired players expressed that they were not interested in watching or attending games after retirement. Some expressed that they did not have time in their new life to watch or attend games, while others did mention that the feeling of watching the game just wasn't the same. Many players expressed that they still enjoy watching the sport, but that watching and attending games is just not a priority in their lives anymore. The interviewed retired MLB players who continued their careers in the sport as coaches, scouts, and even one broadcaster, noted that they were still involved in the sport and watching and attending games is an expected and important part of their career, and still enjoyable. It seems that newly retired players are less likely to watch and attend games for a while. After a few years, they are more likely to start watching the game again. The initial lack of interest in watching baseball suggests that the sense of loss after retirement might give some a sense of alienation from the sport, but it also suggests that one can redefine himself as a "fan" or spectator of the sport eventually as time passes.

The Importance of The Game. The participants expressed that baseball was one of the most important aspects of their lives even from an early age.

These players became the “best of the best” because of their total commitment to the game. Most interviewees noted their level of commitment and passion for the game was a defining aspect of their life. There was common sense that they were all part of an elite class of athletes as a direct result of their total and absolute commitment to the game. The game had to be the most important thing in their lives alongside their family and faith in the magnitude of importance. If it were not for the total commitment to the game, then they would not have made it to the MLB. A sense of brotherhood among MLB players was also a pervasive positive theme throughout the interviews.

Career Planning and Job Training. Overwhelmingly, the retired players expressed that there was never any career planning for a life outside of baseball. Even up until retirement, most players did not have the time to think about career planning. Those who did mention career planning were thinking regarding continuing a career in the sport in some capacity.

The interviewees did not have any significant job training before their MLB careers and did not plan for any vocational training outside the sport of baseball before retirement. Most agreed that the time commitment to baseball prohibited any vocational training. A majority of the retired players had never worked in any industry except odd jobs such as painting or office work.

Peer-Family Acceptance. Most of the interviewees said that friends and family were accepting of their decision to retire. Family members tended to be

more accepting of the player's choice to retire, whereas friends sometimes questioned the decision of the player to leave the game.

Negatives. In general, the negatives associated with playing MLB were injuries, poor performance outcomes, and being away from home and family due to extensive traveling.

Disappointment. Players who did not spend as much time in MLB expressed disappointment that they were forced to retire due to injuries or not being signed. Players who were younger when they retired often expressed a feeling of being disappointed or shocked that their career ended early. Players who did not play MLB for long expressed a sense that they wanted another "shot" to prove their value and worth. Players who did not play as long felt they were forced to retire without getting the opportunity to live up to their potential in the sport. These players expressed a feeling of disappointment and maybe even a sense of embarrassment and frustration at having to retire before their time. Those players who expressed such disappointment tended to be those most susceptible to experiencing sudden foreclosure or identity loss.

Income and New Career Fears. Many players expressed that they were accepting of the lesser income after retirement, but those who had played in the MLB longer found it harder to accept the lower income after retirement. Those who had pensions in their retirement were happier and found the income adjustment less of a burden. Players who had recently retired and not yet settled

into a new career expressed more apprehension than those who had found a new line of work that they were can be successful and comfortable.

Positives. All of the retired players expressed that they were appreciative of the opportunity to play with the “best of the best” during their tenure in the Major League. Several mentioned that being a part of the MLB “brotherhood” was one of the best aspects of being a MLB player. The interviewees also expressed that they enjoyed being treated so well while playing MLB. Also, several mentioned that one of the big perks of being in the MLB was the amazing food spreads. Most of the players said that they would not return to the MLB if given the opportunity. They accepted what time they had and would find it difficult to return to the difficult lifestyle of playing at such a high intensity level again.

Acceptance. Many of the retired players acknowledged a sense of being appreciative for the time they had as MLB players and a feeling of acceptance when their time was over. The interviewees expressed that retirement is inevitable and that they accepted it when it was time to retire. Feelings of gratitude and acceptance made it easier for them to accept their retirement and move on to the next stage of their life. Players who had a sense of acceptance seemed to have an easier time dealing with their retirement after the fact.

Family. Overwhelmingly, players expressed a sense of relief that they could return to their families and live a normal life as fathers and husbands after their retirement. Having more time to spend with family was a major factor in

helping the players make a smoother transition into retirement. Most expressed a desire to be home to help raise kids and to help with normal activities of everyday life. Those who had strong relationships with their wives seemed to have an easier time transitioning into retirement. Likewise, players who had kids were relieved to be going home to enjoy a normal lifestyle as a father.

New Career. Many of the interviewees expressed that they had found a new career that is exciting and fulfilling, especially those who continued to stay connected to the sport of baseball. Those who had found challenging and lucrative careers outside of the sport also reported a high level of satisfaction with their new careers. Likewise, many of the players expressed that friend and family connections were a good support system and provided opportunities for work after retirement. These connections seem to play an important role in easing the transition into retirement because the players felt supported and like they had something and someone to fall back on after their MLB careers. Also, a few of the players who went into sales mentioned that being a former MLB player was a great conversation starter and a way to make a favorable impression on their clients. Many of the interviewees expressed that they were very happy with their new careers. Those who were not as enthusiastic about the new career expressed a sense of acceptance with their new jobs stating that the new career path was “okay” or good enough to support their families.

Crossover Qualities. One of the strongest themes that emerged in the interviews was that these men see themselves as hard-working and resilient

individuals and this determined spirit helped give them comfort during their transition into retirement. Many of the players expressed that when they retired, they were confident that the strong work ethic that led them to the MLB would serve them well in their new career and life paths. These retired players have the “go-getter” attitude that made them the best of the best, and they felt that identity would provide valuable crossover qualities that would help them succeed after their MLB career. Many of the former players went into competitive sales positions or other challenging roles as business owners to find a career path that would ensure a lucrative income for their families. While the younger players understood that they would not necessarily make the same amount of money as when they played in MLB, many of them also expressed a feeling of confidence that they would be able to provide for their family due to their ability to work hard and excel in careers that are challenging and competitive just as they were able to excel in the sport of baseball.

Summary of Results of Phase Two of the Study

Players who stayed connected to the sport of baseball seemed to have an easier transition into retirement. Many advised that MLB players considering retirement should maintain a connection to the sport or explore other passions that they could devote themselves to in a similar way that they devoted themselves to baseball. Players who were injured based their decision to retire on the fact that they just could not perform at an elite level anymore due to their

injuries. Most players found that going back to the Minors after playing in the Majors was very difficult and this made it easier for them to decide to retire. The support of the spouse seemed like a major contributing factor to a successful transition into retirement. Players who felt they had made their mark in the sport were more comfortable retiring, whereas those who had been injured or had spent a short time playing MLB felt they still had something to prove. If a player's sense of pride and accomplishment was stronger, their transition into retirement seemed easier.

All of the retired players felt a sense of gratitude and pride for their time in MLB and for being counted among the best of the best in the sport. Combined with the results in Phase One of the study, the interviews have allowed the researcher to present four major themes that serve to both answer the research questions and to offer suggestions about the implications of this study. These major themes will be presented in the final discussion segment that follows.

Determining Themes from Codes

Looking over the coded qualitative data from both the surveys and the interviews allowed the researcher to begin to see patterns and themes emerging from the results. Having another member of the Kinetic Kidz lab code the data and discuss the most prominent themes that emerged from the qualitative research helped to verify further the veracity of the themes that are presented in the following chapter. Further, recommendations from the dissertation committee

helped guide the researcher towards the themes that were most relevant to the study.

Research Question 1 Results

In Phase One of the study, the AIMS-Plus survey was used to determine how the 194 participants perceive their athletic identity after retirement. Further, additional open-ended survey questions provided insight into how former MLB players viewed their athletic identity about their perceptions of themselves as baseball players at the time of the survey. A majority of the participants expressed that they did indeed experience athletic identity loss after their retirement, as they no longer consider themselves baseball players; however, many of the participants did maintain their perception of being baseball players, some even after many years of retirement from the sport. In response to the question, “How do former MLB players perceive their athletic identity,” The results presented in this chapter show that a majority of former MLB players no longer perceive themselves to be baseball players. However, most former players still retain some of their athletic identity as can be seen in their AIMS-Plus scores.

Research Question 2 Results

The coding of the open-ended questions provided a rich overview of the perceptions of athletic identity in the former players and allowed the researcher to identify subsamples of high and low identity loss subjects and analyze how they described their identity after discontinuation. In response to the question, “How do former MLB players describe their identity after discontinuation from baseball?”

many retired players moved past their identities as baseball players to perceive themselves as former MLB players, coaches, and in some cases their identity perceptions evolve into new identities related to family and new career ventures.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of athletic identity in former MLB players and determine how their perceptions of identity changed after their discontinuation from MLB. The objective of the researcher in answering the research questions was to present valuable information that may help explain how former MLB players perceive athletic identity and how these perceptions have changed over time. It was the desire that the data gathered herein might shed light upon the experiences of former MLB players. Accordingly, it is hoped that this study will prove useful in understanding former MLB players and athletic identity loss and eventually guide future studies aimed at solutions that will allow former MLB players to make smoother transitions from MLB to life after MLB. Current and former MLB players are encouraged to read the summary page (Appendix F) that is included in the appendices.

As previously noted, research has shown that reporting of emotions and feelings associated with retirement from sport can be a beneficial part of the overall adjustment process (Lavalley, Gordon, & Grove, 1997). Further, account-making following a traumatic event (i.e. retirement), also has recorded benefits (Harvey, 1996; Harvey, Orbuch, & Fink, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1988). The conceptual framework of this study provides a historical representation of how athletic identity theory was conceptualized and then applied to this present study. Phase Two of this study allowed the researcher to get an even more in-depth view of the emotional reactions and perceptions of 20 of the participants who were

identified in Phase One as experiencing both high and low identity loss. Comparing the statistical results of the AIMS-Plus Survey with the textual analysis of the coded open-ended survey responses in Phase One of the study and the thematic results of the interviews in Phase Two of the study, allowed for triangulation of data and strengthened the validity of the outcomes that are presented in themes that emerged from the study. The noitons Sudden Foreclosure and Identity Loss emerged from all three aspects of the data analyzed, the AIMS-Plus results, the coded open-ended survey responses, and the interview responses. Crossover Qualities that support a successful career after retirement also emerged from the data collected. Additionally, the theme of Timing is Everything or Time Heals All Wounds emerged in the perceptions of the participants' coded identifications after retirement in the survey and also in the interviews. In conclusion, a theme of The Beginning and End, The Meaning of Life with and without Baseball emerged in the results of both the survey responses in Phase One and the interview responses in Phase Two of the study.

Theme One: Sudden Foreclosure and Identity Loss

As previously noted, baseball players exhibit identities that are different from other athletes (Heilbrun & Renaud, 2010). Not only do many MLB players have the potential to have longer careers than some other sports, such as football, but they also have some of the longest seasons and most grueling travel schedules of any of the major professional sports. This difference, predictably, means that MLB players are at a higher risk of having high degrees of

exclusivity while active in their sport which, in turn, places them at above average risk of experiencing sudden identity foreclosure should their careers end abruptly. Accordingly, there is an inverted relationship between the extensive process and drawn-out period of time through which a baseball player's identity is established and the sudden impact of loss when one's career ends. Despite the evolution and extended process of establishing one's identity, the loss of knowing who or what one is or is not, can occur suddenly (Carver & Scheier, 1992).

Identity foreclosure has been called "a construct used to describe people who have committed to an occupation or an ideology without first engaging in exploratory behavior" (Good, et al., 1993, p. 2). In less complex terms, when one has a high degree of exclusivity—that is, a single paradigm emerges as the dominant category by which one defines himself—one is likely to experience loss when that identity is challenged, or life situations make living out that identity no longer possible. Those who experience identity foreclosure tend to experience feelings of stress, anxiety, and even grief similar to that expressed when one loses a loved one or experiences another profound loss (Carver & Scheier, 1992). Without a sense of one's identity, an individual is left without a sense of purpose. Depression frequently accompanies those who experience identity foreclosure (Cieslak, 2004).

Sudden foreclosure occurs when one experiences identity foreclosure unpredictably, or quickly, following some sort of life-altering event. For the

purposes of this study, sudden foreclosure is instigated by whatever event brought on one's retirement from the sport. For many potential reasons a player might experience sudden foreclosure, particularly if he incurs a career-ending injury, sees a sudden decline in his performance, or simply fails to crack a team's roster. This might mean that, in spite of having experienced setbacks in the past, the athlete finds himself no longer being a baseball player for the first time since early childhood.

The theme of Sudden Foreclosure emerged in many of the open-ended responses of the former players who participated in this study. Kroger's (1995) delineation between "firm" and "developmental" foreclosure statuses was evident in the sample population of former players surveyed and tested in this research. According to Kroger, firm foreclosures are clearly defined, clearly experienced and felt by the individual experiencing it, and mark a clear moment of transition from one's former identity to a status of identity loss or a new identity. Developmental foreclosures, conversely, can amount to just as much identity loss quantitatively, but the loss is experienced over a span of time as one, consciously or subconsciously, loosens his grip on old identity structures and takes hold of new forms of identity.

In this study, many participants indicated that the moment they walked off the field and into retirement they realized that they were no longer a player and would never play again. These responses indicate "firm foreclosures." Ill-prepared for the sudden termination of their careers, many expressed, in their

own terms, that such an experience was like walking blindfolded into a brick wall. It was sudden, somewhat shocking, and left them bewildered as to where they should go next with their lives. Others suggested that they maintained their identity as baseball players (that is, their sense of athletic identity) for a while but experienced identity loss gradually, little by little, as time progressed. Participants who responded in this manner indicated that they experienced “developmental foreclosures.” Many, in fact, reflected that they no longer perceived themselves as being baseball players and some could not identify a particular moment when such a realization took place. Only a select few were able to maintain their athletic identities as professional baseball players, and many times these were the participants who continued their association with the sport by coaching or moving on into careers within MLB.

Those who experienced what have been termed “firm” foreclosures typically experienced a sudden sense of identity loss as opposed to others who gradually lost their athletic identity over time if they ever lost it at all. The degree by which one experiences and the adverse effects of identity loss tended to be associated most closely with how firm, or sudden, one’s identity loss occurred. The more premature—that is, before one had reached his goals for his career as a professional baseball player, or felt that he was satisfied with the course his career had taken—one’s retirement, the more profound the sense of one’s identity loss seemed to be. Even though the same degree of identity loss might occur, the shock of its suddenness causes a reaction and sensation that other

former players who experience their loss more gradually do not experience. This is somewhat akin to the notion that if an individual were to toss a frog into a boiling pot of water, the frog would immediately jump out, whereas if one places the frog in cool water and gradually increases the temperature over time, the frog will often boil without recognizing the change. Loosely, the metaphor applies to the jarring experience many professional baseball players go through when the end of their careers is hoisted upon them suddenly, not according to one's wishes or plans.

All of the above corroborates Cieslak's (2004) conclusion which challenged previous research indicating that those who have higher levels of identification with the athlete role are more susceptible to experiencing identity foreclosure (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Good, et al.,1993). At least in terms of MLB athletes, those who have longer careers may very well have a higher sense of athletic identity than those whose careers end prematurely, but the sense of loss experienced when careers end early may very well lead to higher degrees of identity foreclosure. Accordingly, it appears that the most significant factor in determining whether or not a retiring athlete will experience stress or anxiety related to identity foreclosure seems to be the suddenness of career termination rather than the degree with which one identifies as an athlete at the cusp of his professional career. Many who have the strongest sense of athletic identity and have the longest-lasting careers, rather than experiencing foreclosure, are more easily able to transition into baseball-related careers post-

retirement and this helps them maintain their athletic identity well beyond the conclusion of their playing career.

Though a majority of the former players expressed perceptions of losing their athletic identity as baseball players, as indicated by lower scores on the AIMS-Plus and in the open-ended survey responses and interview questions, such results were not universal. Many of the participants still exhibited strong personality traits related to sport that served them well in their lives after retirement. Many of these former MLB players were able to favorably exploit crossover qualities in their subsequent careers after retirement from baseball.

Theme Two: Crossover Qualities in Major League Baseball Players

As sections of the AIMS-Plus survey revealed, there are many aspects of the sport that remains important to the former players' lives, yet overall their scores were perceived as being lower than when they played baseball professionally. At the same time, it should be noted that a mean score on any category is exactly that—an average of the scores of all participants—and does not represent the experience of any one individual. By drawing upon the skills and lessons learned—such as teamwork, leadership, focus and dedication—in professional baseball, many participants were able to ease the negative feelings associated with identity foreclosure through crossover qualities, that is, qualities from their athletic experience that translate or “crossover” into new careers. For those who found crossover into other baseball-related fields, a sense of athletic

identity could largely be maintained, although reframed, in a way to minimize the impact of foreclosure. For those who were able to employ crossover qualities to establish new careers in other fields, forging new identities associated with new ventures often assuaged the negative symptoms of foreclosure.

Only some of the most recent studies pertaining to athletic identity, identity loss, and the retirement of athletes have examined measures that aid retiring athletes in transitioning into new careers. However, one of the most common themes emerging in the research that has been done is in the ability to transfer the skills learned on the athletic field into other real-world scenarios, jobs, hobbies or careers. According to a study of retiring athletes conducted by Lavillee (2005) “the transfer of skills from one domain to another, as well as the teaching of new skills to cope with their career termination, were...likely to have had a significant impact on [athletes’] ability to cope with their retirement” (p. 199).

In the open-ended survey questions, many participants expressed strong perceptions of themselves as coaches, business entrepreneurs, managers, successful sales associates, and successful professionals within MLB. Others expressed their new identities in other mentally and physically challenging fields such as firefighting and law enforcement, or demonstrated success in other careers that put them in the spotlight such as radio and television broadcasting. A majority of the participants went on to have successful careers in challenging fields whether in a continuation of their association with baseball, or in pursuing

their aspirations to run their own business. What these participants seem to have in common is a strong work ethic and drive to succeed. Those interviewed often expressed a sense of satisfaction in finding new careers that allowed them to transfer their talents on the field into other dynamic professions whether on or off the field. These successful transitions into new careers demonstrate how the qualities of hard work, endurance, and perseverance, along with a strong will to succeed, are all crucial characteristics needed to reach the pinnacle of success, as evident in elite athletes playing in MLB. These aspects of athletic identity also serve as fundamental crossover qualities for success in new careers after retirement from professional baseball. Put another way, among those who have had the most success in their post-MLB careers, the majority expressed that they managed to convert lessons learned and skills practices during their many years associated with baseball into other professional contexts.

These responses reflect what other studies have shown related to crossover abilities and transitions from professional sports into other careers. Research by Danish and his colleagues (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993) linked potential through sport psychology to the potential to enhance life skills. These skills, which should prove valuable throughout the course of one's life, include things like the ability to perform under pressure, to communicate well with others, to set and attain goals, and to accept both criticism and feedback as a component of learning and the bettering of oneself. Miller and Kerr (2002) have likewise explored how traits associated with elite performance in professional

sports, such as the pursuit of excellence, can ease stress and reduce anxiety upon the termination of one's professional athletic career. In short, this research has predictably reflected what these prior studies affirmed.

While many former MLB players experience profound senses of loss due to sudden foreclosure, the majority of players have found ways to move beyond that. For some, transitioning into new concepts of "self" took more time than others. More often than not, the participants of this study sought out opportunities that would challenge them and allow them to succeed financially as well as develop new identities in their careers beyond playing MLB. Some moved beyond the distress of foreclosure by maintaining another form of connection to the sport—i.e. coaching, broadcasting, working for MLB in another capacity—while others moved beyond the distress of foreclosure by finding entirely new careers ranging from warehouse workers to business entrepreneurs, or by furthering their education and entering a new professional field. Though making the transition away from playing professional baseball was difficult, the former players relied on these crossover qualities and the support of family and friends to help them move toward new goals and new perceptions of their identities. Though many experienced emotional distress upon retirement, their pursuit of new careers and the passing of time, in most instances, allowed them to eventually to make the transition and accept their new roles and new positions in life.

According to Lavillee's (2005) study, it takes very little intentional training to make athletes aware of the fact that the skills they already possess have utility outside of their sport. In many cases, those who do not effectively employ crossover skills in other domains fail to do so simply because they have never seriously considered how their sport-related skills might be valuable in other contexts. Lavillee's research suggested that as few as three intentional sessions preparing current athletes to transition their skills into other jobs or careers can have measurable positive results. While baseball is a team sport, there are also certain traits of a baseball player's discipline that involve individual responsibility and performance. In other words, baseball prepares one well for a dynamic common in other professional environments where a combination of individual responsibility and discipline channeled into a corporate or "team" effort is necessary. Accordingly, as many of this study's respondents have shown, crossover qualities and transitional skills from baseball can lead to success in other professional contexts.

While many retired players have discovered this themselves, a more intentional effort on the part of those who might prepare players for life post-retirement can seemingly pay significant dividends, with relatively short investments of time involved. While proposing specific measures may be beyond the scope of this study, the common theme of crossover abilities linked to post-retirement success should lead subsequent researchers and practitioners to further

explore practical ways to introduce such themes to active or recently retired players to encourage more positive prognoses in terms of post-career success.

Theme Three: Timing is Everything and Time Heals All Wounds

Without question, the participants of this study experienced stress when they retired from the sport that had defined their lives and identities for so long. Both the timing of their retirement relative to the expectations and goals they had for their careers and the time that had passed since retirement, however, had a significant impact on how the study's participants related to their retirement experiences. Particularly, those experiencing sudden foreclosure on account of premature termination of their careers felt anxiety over identity loss more acutely than those who attained individual and team career goals and felt that their careers had met their expectations and personal goals. Because most of the players whose careers ended abruptly were younger, with a more important sense that finding a new career rather than simply enjoying retirement was necessary, the psychological wounds experienced by early retirement were further compounded by internalized pressures to do something new with their life. MLB players whose retirements occurred later, after longer careers, and based on their own decision to leave the sport, tended to have fewer wounds associated with identity loss and were better prepared psychologically to transition into the next phase of their lives. Accordingly, "timing is everything" when it comes to retirement itself and how former MLB players adapt to life after baseball.

Irrespective of the “timing” of one’s retirement, however, the vast majority of participants indicated that their relationship to the sport continued to evolve with the passing of time. For those whose wounds were profound, time was an important factor in easing their pain and sense of loss. Regardless of if the player spent only a short time in MLB or over 15 years playing MLB, it seemed that their perceptions either changed and developed over time or that their identities became even more solidified as they continued in their careers. Those who played the longest seemed to retain their identity as players, whereas those who experienced sudden foreclosure or eventual identity loss seemed to express that those feelings of loss or bitterness subsided over time. In either case, the length of time they remained involved in the sport or the passage of time that allowed them to establish their new identities seemed to provide new insights and perspectives for the retired players. In most cases, time allowed the former players to establish new perceptions of their identities in relation to sport and gave them the opportunity to devote more time and energy into other areas of their lives that mattered most to them, their families in particular.

The relationship between the passing of time, adjustment to post-retirement life, and the healing of the psychological wounds experienced by the sense of identity loss was illustrated by how respondents discussed watching or attending MLB games as former players. Many expressed that it was painful to watch MLB games after retirement, and some expressed feelings of bitterness that their time had come to an end, in some cases, what they perceived to be

prematurely. Others admitted that they did not watch for a time, but either believed that they will eventually watch the sport more regularly or have started to watch as time has passed and they have adjusted their relationship to the sport post-retirement. One respondent, for example, said, “When I first retired I didn’t want to watch... I missed it too much then... but it’s different when you get older.” In other words, time has a way of healing the wounds making relating to the sport as a fan less painful for many as time passes. What can be a painful experience for some immediately after retirement can once again become a source of enjoyment after time has assuaged the feelings of loss that are experienced suddenly upon retirement. Further analysis could be conducted to examine any corollaries between one’s desire, or lack thereof, to watch MLB games post-retirement and different variables accounting for the length of one’s career, whether or not he achieved his career-oriented goals, or whether his career ended abruptly due to injury or poor performance. Nonetheless, even for those exhibiting the most acute sense of sudden identity loss due to foreclosure, many expressed a gradual willingness and desire to enjoy the sport as a spectator with the passing of time.

These results corroborate the findings of other studies that have examined the role of “timing,” particularly with respect to premature endings of professional sports careers. Tasiemski et al., (2004) showed that athletes who experienced spinal-cord career-ending injuries also experienced a profound sense of identity-loss related to the premature ending of their athletic careers with some

variance between “past and current athletic experience and the relative success or failure in this domain” (p. 366). At the same time, however, it was unclear whether or not these results could be duplicated in studies that involved less physically debilitating instigators of career termination. The results here suggest that while there may be differences in degree of a sense of loss, whatever loss is experienced by retiring MLB athletes on account of an early ending to one’s career, in terms of identity, is similar, regardless of the particular reason that the player’s retirement was forced upon him. At the same time, while Tasiemski et al., (2004) suggest that it might take longer, time also had a way of aiding former athletes in adapting to their new situation in life. While this study involved individuals who were otherwise physically incapable of transitioning into many careers, the fact that limitation did not preclude one from developing new senses of identity through the passage of time following retirement from sport suggests, as established in this study, that former athletes might find new sources of happiness and fulfillment with time’s passing as well. Stephen, Fraser and Marcia (1992) studied the correlates of moratorium-achievement cycles as identities develop across one’s life. What these researchers suggested coincides with what this study has discovered, namely, that individuals alternately cycle between periods of identity-constructing (achievement) and identity-reframing/reconstructing (moratorium) cycles throughout life. That is to say, earlier formed identities can achieve a sense of disequilibrium due to changing factors in one’s life leading to newly consolidated identity structures that follow

the former constructs during the cross of time. What these researchers found was that two variables—typically linked to personality—tended to govern how easily one transitioned from phases of identity-achievement to identity-moratorium and identity-reconstruction. These variables were termed “instrumental” versus “experiential oriented” reasoning systems. While an instrumental orientation in one’s personality tends to be goal-seeking and achievement oriented (traits that one might identify as necessary for someone who has attained the elite status of a MLB player), experiential orientation tends to be defined by experience-seeking and a quest for meaning in one’s life. Stephen et al., (1992) found empirical data that links these different personality orientations to identity statuses; these orientations are not necessarily static, or unchanging, but can be alternately developed alongside one’s identity development. In other words, most individuals have components of each orientation and either side can be strengthened and reinforced according to one’s experiences. While individuals with either personality orientation can eventually reconstitute new identities across time, it was proposed by these researchers that a balance in personality orientations tends to lead to a more successful transition from conditions of identity foreclosure to new and satisfying identity constructs.

In short, what all of the above suggests in light of the research gleaned from this study is that while “time heals all wounds,” efforts to encourage well-rounded orientations that value meaning, not just achievement, in terms of one’s experience in MLB sports and through encouraging meaning in other domains of

life (i.e. religion, family, or other hobbies) can lead to personality dispositions amongst MLB players that will more easily adapt to the periods of moratorium (identity foreclosure) experienced after retirement and can, in turn, lead to forming new identity constructs to replace whatever loss is experienced. Time is a natural remedy for many forms of identity loss, even sudden identity foreclosure, but the effectiveness of time to heal such wounds will vary from person-to-person. While some of this depends upon one's natural personality traits, it can be expected, based on the rigors required for MLB players, that a large number of them will gravitate toward achievement-oriented personality types which can slow-down the process of time in healing such wounds of identity loss without intentional efforts to expand one's personality into the experiential and meaning-seeking orientations. While it might be a general benefit to help retiring and retired MLB players balance their personalities accordingly, it should also be noted that the levels of success attained in the MLB can have direct correlation into other achievement-oriented undertakings, such as establishing oneself in a new career, or reaching newly defined goals. Accordingly, it should be emphasized that the benefits of an achievement-oriented personality type should not be excluded from one's post-retirement outlook on identity reconstruction. Rather, it should be insisted that this strength be corroborated by a willingness to explore and find meaning in a variety of new responsibilities, goals, roles or tasks.

What emerges from the Timing is Everything and Time Heals All Wounds theme in this research is a keen awareness that there is both great consistency in how these factors play a role in how one relates to his athletic identity post-retirement, but also a significant disparity based, in part, on the timing and experience of the individual as a MLB player as well as the personality tendencies that may predominate in some individuals more than others. Thus, this theme is both universal and particular in that it applies to all retired MLB players, but it also applies to each player differently due to a number of extenuating circumstances and factors.

Theme Four: The Beginning and End, the Meaning of Life With and Without Baseball

As has been addressed earlier in this study, and should be underscored here, when professional athletes retire from their sport their experience is often different than when one retires at a typical retirement age from other careers (Baillie & Danish, 1992). One's baseball career, at least in terms of how one's athletic identity is formed, truly begins in early childhood but can often end much sooner than professionals in traditional careers. Thus, when one's baseball career ends, a player not only has to come to grips with losing the very thing that has defined his sense of self throughout childhood—a time when many other adolescents explore a variety of identity sources—but he also has to consider what he hopes to do with what is left of the larger portion of his remaining life. For many if not most retiring players, there is more life yet to live in terms of

numbers of years after the sport than the life that they had previously known. At the same time, there is a sense that when one retires at such a young age and is seeking to enter a traditional workforce, or forge a new sense of identity, that he is far behind his peers of a similar age. In other words, he enters the workplace as a real-world rookie (Kane, 1991).

Overall, the results presented in this study show that baseball was the most important aspect of these former players' existence early in their lives. The participants expressed time and time again that the only aspects of life that compared to the importance of baseball were their family and in some cases their religious faith. Early in their athletic careers, baseball was the sole focus of their ambition and drive. Apart from such dedicated drive, these players never would have been able to reach the elite status of becoming a MLB player. Many of the participants expressed the joy that playing baseball brought to their lives as well as the appreciation they have for the special time in their lives that they were considered to be the best in the world at their sport. Life was baseball and baseball was life early in the MLB careers of these former players. As time passed, however, they had to face the inevitable decision to retire. Some were forced to make the decision—to the point that it was not really a decision at all—whereas others struggled to weigh the pros and cons of such a decision as the seasons passed. Each season is a significant commitment—ultimately consuming the majority of a player's upcoming year of life. Overwhelmingly, the participants revealed that the importance of family eventually began to take

precedent over the incredibly time-consuming job of playing ball. In many cases, retiring to be home with their children was a source of joy and happiness. These positive feelings, however, were often mixed with the sadness that they felt when they knew they would never play professional baseball again. Many, no longer considering themselves baseball players, revealed that they now place more importance on their roles as fathers, grandfathers, husbands, coaches, and successful businessmen. Such results were evident across the board in the participants' AIMS-Plus role identity results, their open-ended survey responses, and in the interviews of those who participated in Phase Two of the study. In short, their lives went on after baseball. Those who continued working within MLB or chose to coach young players often expressed that staying connected to the sport allowed them to continue to fuel their passion for the sport. Often those whose perceptions changed from player to coach expressed a sense of satisfaction in passing their knowledge and skill on to the next generation of players. Regardless of their personal experiences and the circumstances of their retirement, the majority of participants expressed a sense of pride in being part of the elite club of world class players that make up the Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association (MLBPAA), a brotherhood united in their love and dedication to the game of baseball regardless of age, the number of years played, or the time that has passed since their retirement. The experiences and skill sets acquired in their pursuit of excellence endures beyond their years on the field, even though their sense of athletic identity may have changed and evolved over

time. Though the challenges of retirement can be tough, these former players revealed that the joy of playing MLB was worth the expense. Understanding the big picture can help aspiring players, current MLB players, and former MLB players prepare and plan for their careers as professional athletes and smoothly make the transition to life after their retirement as professional players.

Summary of Themes

At the onset of this study it had been questioned whether studies pertaining to athletic identity and identity loss upon the retirement of professional athletes could not be readily applied to those retiring from MLB, mostly on account of many features of a MLB career that set it apart from the experiences of other professional athletes. In truth, it should be granted that every sport has unique experiences. Nonetheless, the experiences unique to former MLB players seemed to touch upon the very dimensions of life that are most responsible for identity-formation. The particularities of a MLB career have been outlined on multiple occasions during the course of this dissertation and need not be repeated again here. That being said, the results of this study both predictably showed uniqueness amongst retiring MLB players when compared to those of other sports while also showing a number of similarities. This is likely the case because, as this study has shown, how one experiences negative impact due to identity foreclosure has more to do with the sudden change in one's identity structures than it has to do with a quantifiable loss of athletic identity. All professional athletes, by virtue of the degree of dedication it takes to achieve

an elite level in any sport, likely exhibit high degrees of athletic identity. That said, the exclusivity of athletic identity experienced by active MLB players tends to rate higher than that in some sports, thus giving many MLB players a more profound challenge when coping with sudden identity foreclosure upon retirement. While each of the above themes might occur in similar studies pertaining to retiring and retired professional athletes in a number of professional sports, the results of this study have shown particular nuances in the experiences of MLB players that require, in turn, equally nuanced advice, recommendations and solutions. The four themes outlined herein can effectively set the agenda, or at least define the playing field, for subsequent researchers, and even provide a framework for counselors and clinicians who work either with active MLB players to aid with career and retirement planning or with retiring and retired MLB players who are struggling with transitions into post-MLB life. Ultimately, the prognosis for a former MLB player to live a satisfying and happy life after the sport is promising. While transitions out of the sport can be incredibly difficult, more for some than others depending upon both personality and unique circumstances, when approached in a healthy way, one can appreciate how baseball has prepared him for life's future challenges and opportunities. New dreams can be imagined, pursued and realized.

Relevance to Previous Literature

As the four primary themes were elaborated upon above, corroborating and even conflicting research has been engaged along with explanations

concerning why this study either agrees with or disagrees with conclusions drawn by other researchers. The literature review provides a broad sketch of the history of how identity, generally, has been perceived in Western thought beginning with the ancient Greeks, through the pre-modern, and into the modern and post-modern eras. In general, it was shown that Western thought has progressed from an emphasis on “being” to “becoming.” In other words, earlier notions of identity seen as something both essential to oneself and predetermined that must be discovered in the course of one’s life, eventually gave way to a process-oriented approach to identity that sees identity as an ever-evolving and changing component of self that is always on the way to what it might become but is never, quiet, arrived (Wang, 2007; Stokes, 2011; Farrell, 2014). While an emphasis on “being” and determined identity leaves one with little hope if he experiences identity foreclosure during the course of life, an overemphasis on the evolution of identity, that identity is always “becoming,” could leave an individual in a constant struggle to find meaning in one’s life as the things that define him are ever changing. Freud, however, believed that that “being” and “becoming” are not inimical concepts. While there is undoubtedly tension between whatever is predetermined in one’s genetic makeup and constitution, these predetermined traits are more like tendencies than firmly defined concepts of self. Thus, Freud embraced both determinative and adaptive features in identity development (Epstein, 1994). Erickson’s eight stages moved beyond Freud’s narrowly defined psychosexual stages of identity development and

posited a process that develops as one proceeds through these various stages during the entire course of one's life (Erickson, 1968). When one proceeds through various stages, he either exhibits mastery of that stage or inadequacy often leading to despair (Cote & Levine, 1987). The question that emerges relevant to this study is whether or not the "despair" of having effectively bypassed other normal stages of development will present incalculable obstacles to one's ongoing contentment and happiness for someone who is going through a stage typically associated with older individuals—namely, processes involved in retirement—as he leaves Major League Baseball.

If Erickson's eight stages can be granted, at least loosely speaking, this study conflicts with any notion that these stages must necessarily be processed sequentially or in temporal succession. Ultimately, this study recognizes that a healthy relationship to one's identity is one characterized both by discovery and also exploration. It affirms a necessary tension between the concepts of both "being" and "becoming." While this research demonstrated the importance of such a balance regarding retiring MLB players, in truth, this insight is relevant to anyone who might experience identity development in non-traditional ways, outside of the mainstream perception of successive stages each giving way to the next. Foreclosure may give someone—as many of the participants in this study experienced—a sense of profound loss. At the same time, however, it provides new opportunity. Stages bypassed in one's earlier development, or even those

previously mastered in one way or another, can be revisited and preprocessed as one's identity experiences seismic shifts, particularly due to sudden foreclosure.

Beginning with Reynolds and Pope (1991) researches began to examine the interplay of multiple forces of identity formation within an individual. As Deux (1993) showed, building upon the research of Reynolds and Pope, identity is formed both as one reflects inwardly upon oneself (it has internal sources of development) and also externally based on one's relationships and experiences. Put another way, one's identity is not formed linearly, or two-dimensionally, as singular influences impact one's concept of self. Instead, a number of factors work together and come at an individual three-dimensionally to strengthen or weaken different concepts of self. This leads to the ultimate acceptance of some forms of identity and the rejection of others. Several categories, consistent with these "multiple identities" theories were explored and considered as they might be particularly relevant to shaping of athletic identity in baseball players who form such identities beginning in childhood and progressing through adulthood as one pursues and experiences a professional MLB career. Namely, things like social identity, masculine identity, racial or ethnic identity, and occupational identity all can be influenced by one's activity in the sport. When the sport plays such a pivotal role in defining these formative categories of one's sense of self, the absence of the sport when one experiences sudden foreclosure can give one a sense of loss, not only in terms of being a MLB player per se, but also in how one relates to others (social identity), his understanding of his masculinity

(masculine identity), and what careers or jobs he might seek in the future (occupational identity). In an ethnically diverse league like MLB, racial biases and stereotypes he is unaccustomed to experiencing, or experiences differently, as a MLB player in contrast to how they are experienced in everyday life can also be jarring, or even shocking. Thus, what one broadly construes as one's "athletic identity," can lead to a high degree of exclusivity for active players in the sport insofar as one's relationship to the sport defines how an individual relates to so many other categories of importance that for other people are governed by a variety of other factors—not just one's role in a sport—and are not at as great a risk when one's identity undergoes changes.

All of the above was evident in this research as former MLB players noted significant shifts in how they identified as baseball players post-retirement. While active players score higher in how they identify the importance of sport in their lives, for former players one's relationship to baseball was a much lower priority. Many of the open-ended responses pertaining to exclusivity, for instance, expressed some difficulty in transitioning from a highly exclusive sense of athletic identity to more multi-faceted identity concepts post-retirement. Responses such as, "Early in my career baseball was definitely the most important and majority of my time spent thinking about it. Now my faith and family come well before that" or "During participation in baseball it was almost a total life encompassment...It is important to transition to this same level of concentration in other activities after professional participation, but for me it's

tough to do sometimes” indicate both a significant reframing of priorities and changes in identity that occur, but also hint at the struggle to identify with new roles as thoroughly and comprehensively as one’s athletic identity had served them during their active careers. This suggests that the issue is not only how one can cope with identity loss post-retirement, but how one can transition from a sense of a single identity concept—athletic identity—that served as a context for understanding other profound issues such as social interactions, one’s gender roles, or even one’s race or ethnicity and occupation, and begin to understand these various issues in one’s life through new lenses or other reframed identities that exhibit more variance than the exclusivity of active MLB players.

Accordingly McEwen’s (1996) mathematical visual representation of how multiple identities converge and impact someone across time is particularly helpful in understanding how athletic identity continues or, in some cases, ceases to play a prominent role for retired MLB players. Theme three—Timing is Everything and Time Heals all Wounds—is particularly relevant to McEwen’s insights. If one can envision one’s identity as it illustrates the entire process of one’s identity formation across life as a cone, or even a cylinder, with varying dimensions and circumferences and then charting within that conical/cylindrical representation horizontal cross-sections that illustrate one’s identity concept at any given moment in time, while viewing vertical cross-sections as representations of how different categories of identity rise and fall to and from prominence in one’s sense of self, it can be illustrated how different retiring

players experience identity loss at the conclusion of their careers. For many, who experience sudden foreclosure, there is an initial absence of one's relationship to the sport that leaves one with a very narrow concept of self after retirement. Over time, however, many begin to redefine what their athletic identity means and are able to find ways to appropriate it to new life experiences. Using McEwan's vision model, an MLB athlete is less likely to experience his identity formation in a clear conical form than he is likely to experience an interruption, constrained in the middle as if narrowed and then widened again, more like a bow-tie. The moment of identity foreclosure, then, affords an opportunity for one's identity to re-form conically from the moment of experienced identity loss even as he experiences new forms of identity—either by reframing his athletic identity in way relevant to his new life, or by replacing it with other identity-defining concepts.

The research conducted herein suggests that research such as that conducted by Shavelson et al. (1997) that viewed athletic identity as a multi-dimensional concept with both cognitive structures and social roles, was mostly on-point according to the responses of this studies' participants. Some of the open-ended responses and interview responses for various domains explored by this study clearly exhibit both cognitive and social frameworks for one's athletic identity. Examples of cognitive-oriented responses include, "I prefer to still think of myself as an MLB player;" "I can still consider myself a baseball player because I pitched for a lot of years in the bigs," and, "There was nothing better

than being a big leaguer to me, I think the same way right now as I sit here today.” Socially-oriented responses from this study’s participants include, “Most of my sport interaction is through my children now;” “During my career, it was 100% that people identified me as an athlete. I have gotten away from that now and rarely talk about my career,” and “I spent the better part of 2 years comparing myself to people who still played and felt a deep dissatisfaction with my new life in the real world.” In other words, cognitive-mental constructs about how one chooses to reflect on his career—but when actively playing and after retirement—clearly play a role in one’s athletic identity. How one gauges his social interactions related to the sport—whether he continues to maintain his sense of athletic identity by participating in the sport with his children, by comparing oneself to current MLB players, or by maintaining baseball-related friendships through the years—also have a significant impact on how one’s athletic identity persists or ceases to persist post-retirement.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations of the study include that it is the first of its kind to primarily identify how athletic identity functions in the former MLB player context. Certainly studies regarding the psychological impact of retirement upon professional athletes (Weinberg & Around, 1952; Hallden, 1965; Mihovilovic, 1968; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Oregon; 2010; Stambulova et al., 2009) and studies examining the impact of athletic identity upon players of other sports at a variety of levels (Werthner & Orlick, 1986; Baillie & Danish, 1993) have been conducted.

As Owen & King (2015) have demonstrated, however, MLB players have unique experiences spanning the timeframe from when they first begin playing the sport in adolescence through the time when their MLB career ends. For this reason, conclusions from prior research could not be presumed accurate for these purposes. Thus, this study began with a fundamental diagnosis of the issue at stake, namely, how much athletic identity has taken hold in former and current MLB players during the time they were active in their sport as well as how retired professional players understand their relationship to the sport after the conclusion of their careers. The foundation laid by the results discovered above can allow for subsequent studies and hypotheses about methods of transition from a playing career to retirement, and how to uniquely treat MLB players struggling with identity loss. Addressing such matters here was beyond the scope of this study.

Further limitations of this study include the cross-sectional survey design. To specifically identify former MLB players' athletic identity and potential athletic identity loss throughout different time periods throughout their retirement, a longitudinal study would be most appropriate. Recruited participants were not randomly sampled from the entire former MLB population, so it is possible that the sample is not generalizable to all former MLB players. That said, the design of this study was sufficiently accurate to draw the general conclusions this research sought to answer. Several percentage points of variance either way would not have had a sizable impact on the conclusions arrived at above. Therefore, while the

study cannot claim perfect accuracy regarding exact figures, it can nonetheless stand as a reliable summation of the conditions examined therein.

Implications and Future Directions

From this study, it can be inferred that former MLB players, who leave the sport are affected by the timing of their retirement, the cause of their retirement (i.e. poor performance, declining performance with age, planned retirement, or injury), the lack of career planning, and the ability to both retain social relationships with individuals connected to the sport while also successfully forging new relationships unrelated to the sport. Because a number of factors affect an athlete's ability to successfully transition into life beyond professional baseball, and these factors might vary from player-to-player, a comprehensive strategy customized to each player's experience is recommended.

At the same time, a general emphasis amongst current players on post-career planning could be beneficial in helping these players maintain relationships apart from the game, while also taking serious steps toward discovering what personal strengths or interests players might have outside of the sport that might eventually be nourished to provide satisfaction in post-retirement life. Lally (2007) has already demonstrated that “the redefinition of self-long before sport career termination may protect one's identity during the transition process” (p. 1). Further exploring how this might be possible within the unique context of MLB—through intentional league-wide and even team-based initiatives—would be a worthy pursuit.

Recognizing that a significant degree of identity foreclosure, or loss, can accompany a MLB player's retirement from the sport it is worth considering how strategies to ease the "suddenness" of this foreclosure might lead to smoother and more satisfying transitions into retirement. Maintaining a connection to the sport seems to be one way of alleviating some of the stress of sudden foreclosure and the loss of athletic identity after retirement. Also, it can be advised that players acknowledge the crossover qualities that make them strong athletes and consider how those advantages may play out in their lives when their professional career as players is over. Another useful suggestion may be to have realistic expectations early on. While striving for excellence, it is also important to realize that careers may potentially end suddenly due to circumstances out of the player's control. Being mentally prepared for sudden disruptions may be as important as being physically prepared for the next game. And if and when circumstances do arise that result in the decision to retire, it may be beneficial for the player to remember the crossover qualities that can help further his identity in new careers. Also, this research suggests that relationships and connections are an important aspect of a player's life before, during, and after their careers as MLB players. Maintaining healthy personal relationships among family and friends could provide essential support during the transition into retirement. Further, players who maintain professional connections within the sport may find further success in a field related to baseball if they choose to do so after retirement. Such connections, particularly with other retiring or retired athletes from the support, might also provide a

support system whereby these former athletes can share their difficulties and struggles with others who understand their unique experiences.

Likewise, career planning and job training may help retired players find a new career path more quickly and with more confidence after discontinuation from MLB. Finally, though players experience stress as a result of sudden foreclosure and identity loss, the active pursuit of new perceptions and new identities both in their professional and personal lives often leads to a sense of fulfillment as time passes. Exploring ways that these interests can be explored, even if only casually, while still active in the sport might also prove helpful for some athletes who are faced with significant amounts of unaccounted for time and energy post-retirement. A casual exploration of interests apart from baseball, while still active in one's career, could ease the sense of aimlessness that accompanies some former athletes in the period immediately following retirement.

Future research could be conducted to determine the extent of athletic identity loss in relation to the number of years of professional play, the age of retirement, and the impact of injuries sustained during the careers of MLB players. Variances in data depending upon the instigating factors leading to retirement should also be explored. While themes from the open-ended interviews conducted in this study have suggested that the effects of identity loss vary depending upon the reasons that led to one's retirement, conducting the first component of the study via AIMS-PLUS by separating populations according to the causes of their retirement might be revealing. Such an effort could help when customizing

strategies for athletes during their transitions into post-MLB life. In addition, it may be useful to conduct research to determine how MLB players might maintain healthy personal relationships despite the amount of time and energy spent devoted to sport. Another important topic of future inquiry may be to explore how young MLB players might increase their focus on future careers or receive beneficial job training in conjunction with their rigid training schedules. Perhaps these types of opportunities could be explored within the purview of the MLB Association. Another interesting direction for research may be in exploring mentor programs between former MLB players and recently drafted players. It would be interesting to see if former MLB players could act as mentors, not only in helping new players develop their technical skills, but also act as mentors in navigating the often uncertain and turbulent waters of life as a MLB player. Likewise, research into mentor programs could provide insight into how former MLB players transition into new roles after retirement and give these experienced retirees opportunities to share their knowledge and life experiences with the next generation of players. A mentoring program could both serve current players prepare for life after baseball while also providing opportunities for retiring players to maintain a connection to the sport, thus alleviating some of the psychological strain experienced in their own transitions due to identity foreclosure.

Conclusion

Playing a competitive sport at the highest level in the world is a challenging, grueling, yet rewarding enterprise. Many childhood dreams are

realized the first time a baseball player dons a MLB team jersey and steps onto a professional field for the first time. Many active and retired former MLB players alike will tell you that it was their love of the game, beginning in early childhood, that drove them to becoming one of the best players in the world. At the same time, however, one dream will inevitably birth new dreams. For many players within baseball, insofar as they remain in the sport, those dreams are typically baseball-related. It might involve an individual goal of mastering a particular pitch, attaining a particular statistic, making the All-Star team or even garnishing their first free-agent contract. For many, team-oriented dreams such as winning a World Series continue to drive them from one season to the next. While some players realize these dreams, many more conclude their careers with at least some of their dreams still on the table. These unique and extraordinary dreams are often left behind and replaced with the dreams of ordinary men and women, such as starting a family, holding down a steady job, seeing their children grow up honorably, and living out their faith or beliefs. Such transitions, however, can often be painful experiences even when these newly defined dreams are worthy and notable. It is not easy to leave behind a world that has effectively defined one's sense of being throughout the course of one's life. It can be frightening, and distressing, to transition into a new phase of life without the sport that had played such a pivotal role in making someone into the person they had become. This is even more difficult when this change occurs abruptly, or sooner than anticipated. Even those who enjoy long MLB careers, however, transition to life after baseball can be

difficult. Though athletic identity scores may decrease over time, perceptions change, the precision of skills fade, and careers may veer off in different directions, what seems to remain common among former MLB players is an enduring love of baseball and memories that last a lifetime. It is my hope that the work of this study can offer some insight into how current and future players can benefit most from their time in MLB and go on to live happy lives on and off the field.

Appendices

Appendix A: Initial Mailed Recruitment Letter

Hello,

My name is Mark Worrell and I am a former MLB player and current PhD student at the University of Texas. I am writing this e-mail to inform you that I am conducting a study regarding identity loss and former Major League Baseball (MLB) players. The purpose of this study is to examine how MLB players form athletic identity and how this might change across their career. I would like to acquire a deeper understanding regarding the relationship between identity and former MLB players in order to help current and future former MLB players thoroughly understand and deal with the effects of identity at the conclusion of their professional baseball careers.

There are minimal risks associated with this study and although there is not tangible compensation for your participation, the information gathered from this study may potentially benefit former MLB players by learning about identity and potentially understanding how identity is conceptualized. Your understanding of the influences on identity may help you in times when your identity may be shifting.

Please remember, participation in this study is completely voluntary and all information obtained from this study will only be shared between approved members of the research team. Your responses from the survey will be coded to be anonymous and any publication or presentation of the results and research will only include information that cannot be linked to your identity. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not negatively impact you in any way, or current and future relationships with (MLB) Major League Baseball and/or the (MLBPAA) Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association. To stop your participation just let Mark Worrell know at any time.

If you would like to participate in this study, please send an e-mail or call Mark Worrell to read the required consent forms. If you would like further information please don't hesitate to contact Mark Worrell at the phone number and/or e-mail address listed below.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Mark Worrell
mworrell@utexas.edu
(561) 703-9366

Appendix B: The Third Version of the AIMS-Plus Survey

Athletic identity is the degree of importance, strength, and exclusivity attached to the athlete role that is maintained by the athlete and influenced by their environment.

Please **circle** the number that best reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement in relation to your sports participation. Please answer these questions based on how you felt when you retired from MLB.

Also, please thoroughly answer the question at the end of each section. These five questions ask you to compare your feelings from early in your MLB career to how you felt when you retired from MLB.

Self Identity: An individual's degree of self-awareness regarding their role as an athlete.

1. I consider myself an athlete.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

2. I have many goals related to sport.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

3. Being an athlete is who I am and I want to make a career of sport.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

4. Being an athlete is an important part of who I am.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

How are your responses in this section ('Self Identity') different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?

Positive Affectivity: The degree to which an individual feels good or encouraged in response to desirable outcomes of sport participation.

5. When I am participating in sport, I am happy.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

6. I get a sense of satisfaction when participating in sport.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

7. My participation in sport is a very positive part of my life.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

8. I feel good about myself when I play well in practice or competition.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

How are your responses in this section ('Positive Affectivity') different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?

Negative Affectivity: The degree to which an individual feels bad or depressed in response to undesirable outcomes of sport participation.

9. I feel bad about myself when I play poorly in practice or competition.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

10. I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

11. I feel badly when I fail to meet my athletic goals.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

12. I would be very depressed if I were cut from the team and could not compete in sport.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

How are your responses in this section ('Negative Affectivity') different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?

Social Identity: An individual's degree of social awareness regarding their role as an athlete.

13. Most of my friends participate in sport.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

14. Other people see me as an athlete.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

15. My family expects me to participate in sport.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

16. It is important that other people know about my sport involvement.

0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100
Neutral

17. I participate in sport for recognition/fame.

Neutral
0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

How are your responses in this section ('Social Identity') different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?

Exclusivity: Refers to the importance of the athlete role in relation to other day-to-day activities.

18. Sport is the most important part of my life.

Neutral
0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

19. I spend more time thinking about the sport than anything else.

Neutral
0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

20. Sport is the only important thing in my life.

Neutral
0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

21. I typically organize my day so I can participate in sports.

Neutral
0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

22. My sports involvement has influenced my day-to-day decision making.

Neutral
0 ___ 10 ___ 20 ___ 30 ___ 40 ___ 50 ___ 60 ___ 70 ___ 80 ___ 90 ___ 100

How are your responses in this section ('Exclusivity') different now from how you would have responded early in your MLB career?

4. What city and state do you currently live in?

5. Approximately, how much Major League Baseball (MLB) service time did you accrue during your MLB career? Please specify the number of years and/or days in your response.

6. Approximately, how much time did you spend playing professional baseball in the Minor Leagues or Independent Leagues? Please specify the number of years and/or days in your response.

7. Do you still consider yourself a baseball player? Please explain

8. Do you have any health related issues and/or injuries related to your time as a MLB player? If so, please state your health related issues and/or injuries.

9. What is your current marital status? (Please check one)

- Single, never married
- Married or domestic partnership
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated

10. What was your marital status the day that you retired from MLB? (Please check one)

- _____ Single, never married
- _____ Married or domestic partnership
- _____ Widowed
- _____ Divorced
- _____ Separated

11. Do you have children? If so, how many? _____

12. Did you have any children the day that you retired from MLB? If so, how many?

13. Do you have any children that are currently MLB player(s) or interested in becoming a MLB player? _____

14. Including yourself, how many people live within your current household?

15. Including yourself, how many people lived within your current household the day that you retired from MLB? _____

16. What was your highest level of education before the first day of your MLB career?

- _____ Home School _____ Nursery School to Eighth Grade
- _____ 9th, 10th, or 11th grade _____ 12th grade, No Diploma
- _____ High School Graduate- High School Diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- _____ Some College Credit, But Less than 1 Year
- _____ 1 or More Years of College, No Degree
- _____ Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS)
- _____ Bachelors Degree (for example: BA, AB, BS)
- _____ Masters Degree (for example: Ma, MS, MEng, MED, MSW, MBA)
- _____ Professional Degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
- _____ Doctorate Degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

17. What was your highest level of education after your final retirement from MLB?

- Home School Nursery School to Eighth Grade
- 9th, 10th, or 11th grade 12th grade, No Diploma
- High School Graduate- High School Diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some College Credit, But Less than 1 Year
- 1 or More Years of College, No Degree
- Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS)
- Bachelors Degree (for example: BA, AB, BS)
- Masters Degree (for example: Ma, MS, MEng, MED, MSW, MBA)
- Professional Degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
- Doctorate Degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

18. What is your current highest level of education?

- Home school Nursery School to Eighth Grade
- 9th, 10th, or 11th grade 12th grade, No Diploma
- High School Graduate- High School Diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some College Credit, But Less than 1 Year
- 1 or More Years of College, No Degree
- Associate Degree (for example: AA, AS)
- Bachelors Degree (for example: BA, AB, BS)
- Masters Degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MED, MSW, MBA)
- Professional Degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
- Doctorate Degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

Questions 19 and 20: Employment can be defined as ‘The condition of having paid work.’

19. Did you secure employment (i.e. full-time, part-time) at any point before the first day of your MLB career? If yes, please specify the type(s) of job(s). If None, please write ‘None’.

20. Did you secure employment (at any point) after your final retirement from your MLB career? If yes, please specify the type(s) of job(s). If None, please write ‘None’.

Questions 21 and 22 are optional questions. Please feel free to omit one or both of these questions if you choose not to answer one or both of these questions.

21. What is your current gross total household income (according to your 2015 tax report)?

- _____ Less than \$100,000
_____ \$100,000 to \$200,000
_____ \$200,000 to \$400,000
_____ \$400,000 to \$600,000
_____ \$600,000 to \$800,000
_____ \$800,000 to \$1,000,000
_____ \$1,000,000 or More

22. Approximately, what was your average gross annual salary during your MLB career (according to your annual tax reports)?

- _____ Less than \$100,000

_____ \$100,000 to \$200,000

_____ \$200,000 to \$400,000

_____ \$400,000 to \$600,000

_____ \$600,000 to \$800,000

_____ \$800,000 to \$1,000,000

_____ \$1,000,000 or More

Appendix C: In-Person or Skype Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The following protocol represents the format and sequence for conducting the semi-structured interview to collect information about former Major League Baseball (MLB) players and their possible experiences leading to identity loss at the conclusion of their MLB career.

Interviewer:

Hi _____, I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me today. I’m collecting information related to former MLB players and identity loss. The purpose of this study is to understand the factors influencing the athletic identity of former MLB players. This research is essential to aid current former and future former MLB players that may have potentially experienced or may experience identity loss at the conclusion of their professional baseball career because a smooth transition (free from identity loss) from professional baseball can positively impact many (current and future) former MLB player’s lives in a variety of facets.

As previously confirmed you are willing to have your interview audio recorded. These records will more accurately represent what is said and help me to authentically interpret your words. I will also type your responses and return them to you to check for accuracy, where you can make changes.

Before we start, I want to assure you that you have rights as a participant. First, your participation in the interview is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable, or you may withdraw from the interview at any time without consequence. Based on your answers, this interview will likely take up to one hour to complete.

I also want to assure you that the interview results will be strictly anonymous. Excerpts of the interview may be published or made public, but your name or any other identifying details will not be revealed. The only people who will have access to the complete audio recording and transcript will be the research team at the University of Texas.

Do you currently have questions regarding this interview? If you have any questions as the interview progresses, or after the interview is over, please feel free to ask me. Are you ready to start the interview?

- 1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.

- 2. How old were you when you first started to play baseball? _____

3. Why did you initially become a professional baseball player?

4. How important was MLB in the grand scheme of your life when you retired from MLB?

5. How did you adjust to a new income when you retired from MLB?

6. What other career(s) did you consider before you retired from MLB?

7. What type(s), if any, of job training did you participate in before your MLB career or during your MLB career?

8. How did the end of your MLB career occur?

9. What were your immediate feelings once you realized that your MLB career ended?

10. Why do you think that you felt this way?

11. Tell me about any specific instance(s) that you think helped you successfully retire from MLB.

12. What are your current feelings about your retirement from MLB?

13. What did your family and/or friends say about your retirement from MLB?

14. How would you feel today if you had the opportunity to play Major League Baseball again?

15. How do you feel now, as a retired MLB player, when you watch MLB on television or at a game?

16. What was the best part of being a Major League Baseball player?

17. What was the worst part of being a Major League Baseball player?

18. How would you describe the transition from your MLB career into your current career?

19. How would you describe your current career?

20. How would you describe your current career's salary?

21. How would you describe your religious commitment when you retired from MLB? Feel free to omit this question if you not want to answer it for any reason(s).

22. How would you describe your religious commitment when you were a MLB player? Feel free to omit this question if you do not want to answer it for any reason(s).

23. What type of advice, if any, would you give to another MLB player that is contemplating retirement from MLB?

24. How would you feel if your son(s) wanted to become a MLB player?

**Appendix D: Scale for Participant Inclusion as High and Low Identity Loss
Participants**

Self Identity					
Positive Affectivity					
Negative Affectivity					
Social Identity					
Exclusivity					

Negative scores= -1 (key words i.e.: less, lower, down, decreased, etc.).

Positive scores= +1 (key words i.e.: high, higher, greater, increased, etc.).

Neutral scores= 0 (key words i.e.: equal, comparable, didn't make sense, etc.).

**Appendix E: Participant Consent Form
A Mixed Methods Study into Former Major League Baseball (MLB) Players**

Research Conducted By:

Mark Worrell, MBA- Kinesiology and Health Education
mworrell@utexas.edu
Phone: 561-703-9366

Darla Castelli, PhD- Kinesiology and Health Education
dcastelli@utexas.edu
Phone: 512-232-7636

Louis Harrison, PhD- Kinesiology and Health Education
lharrison@utexas.edu
Phone: 512-232-4785

My name is Mark Worrell and I am a former (MLB) Major League Baseball player and current PhD student at the University of Texas. I am writing this e-mail to inform you that I am conducting a study regarding identity loss and former MLB players. The purpose of this study is to examine how MLB players form athletic identity and how this might change across their career. I would like to acquire a deeper understanding regarding the relationship between identity and former MLB players in order to help current and future former MLB players thoroughly understand and deal with the effects of identity at the conclusion of their professional baseball careers.

Please read the information below and if you have questions that you would like to ask before deciding whether or not to take part, you can contact me with the above information. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact you in any way, or current and future relationships with MLB and/or the MLB Players Alumni Association. To do so simply tell Mark Worrell that you wish to stop your participation. Mark Worrell will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study: As previously stated, the purpose of this study is to understand the factors influencing the athletic identity of former MLB players. As part of your participation in this study, you will be asked to complete the following task: (a) The Third Version of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale Plus (AIMS-Plus). Some participants may potentially be called upon to participate in a(n) in-person and/or Skype semi- structured interview(s).

As part of your participation in this research study, you will participate in the following:

- The Third Version of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale Plus (AIMS-Plus); up to 10 minutes
- In-person and/or Skype individual semi-structured interview(s) (up to 60 minutes); up to 20 participants will be selected

Total estimated time to participate

- Up to 10 minutes

- Up to 70 minutes, if selected for interview

Potential Benefits: We believe that participants of this survey, former MLB players that have potentially experienced identity loss, may benefit from this study by learning about identity loss and potentially understanding the reason(s) that they have experienced identity loss at the conclusion of their MLB career. Also, former MLB player(s) that want to help future former MLB player(s) with identity loss at the conclusion of their MLB career, have the ability to contribute to this study and make a positive impact on their lives after baseball.

Potential Risks: The risk for participation in this study is minimal. Some participants may experience emotional discomfort from remembering specific instances at the end of their MLB career. Loss of confidentiality is a potential risk that will be minimized by Mark Worrell.

Audio recording usually increases the risk to research subjects. In person and/ or Skype interviews will be audio recorded. All audio recordings will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. The audio recordings will be kept in a secure place (Belmont room 624) on a password-protected computer, behind a locked door. The audio recording will be heard only for research purposes by the investigator (Mark Worrell) and his associate investigators (Dr. Darla Castelli and Dr. Louis Harrison). All audio recordings will be kept for at least five years, then the audio recording will be removed from the digital recording device, and destroyed.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protection: If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you decide to complete this consent form, documentation of this informed consent form will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in room 624 in Belmont Hall at the University of Texas.

If you are selected for an in-person and/or Skype interview and you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only Mark Worrell and his associate investigators (listed above) will have access to the recordings.

Contacts and Questions: If you have any questions regarding the study, please ask now by calling one of the contact numbers or e-mails listed at the beginning of the consent form. If you would like additional information, have questions at a later time, or wish to withdraw your participation, contact one of the researchers listed at the beginning of this consent form. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the

research, please contact James Wilson, PhD., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871 or e-mail: orosc@uts.cc.utexas.edu

You are making a decision about participating in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in this research study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw from the study, please contact Mark Worrell.

I am willing to have my interview audio recorded
 I am not willing to have my interview audio recorded

I, the undersigned, consent to be a participant in this research study. A second copy of this consent form will be provided for your records.

Your Printed Name

Your Signature

Date

Signature of Primary Investigator

Date

Appendix F: Summary of Research into the Athletic Identity Perceptions of Former Major League Baseball (MLB) Players

In the fall of 2016, Mark Worrell, a PhD candidate at the University of Texas and former Major League Baseball (MLB) pitcher, conducted research on the athletic identity of former MLB players. His interest in this subject arose from his own experience with athletic identity loss at the time of his retirement from professional baseball. The primary purpose of his research was to answer the research questions: How do former MLB players perceive their athletic identity and how do those perceptions change over time after their discontinuation from baseball. In answering these questions, Mr. Worrell hoped to shed light on this topic and understand this unique transition into retirement that all MLB players must ultimately face at the conclusion of their professional baseball career.

Previous research has indicated that many former athletes experience athletic identity loss and sudden identity foreclosure after leaving the sport that has defined their identity often since early childhood. This experience of athletic identity loss and sudden identity foreclosure can leave a person feeling disoriented or depressed, and often it takes some time for an individual to restructure their lives in a way that allows them to embrace a new identity as someone other than a player on the field.

Mr. Worrell began his research project by asking members of the Major League Baseball Alumni Association (MLBPAA) to participate in a survey that included the AIMS-Plus, a survey that measures athletic identity, and a series of open-ended questions that would shed light on how former MLB players viewed themselves as baseball players and how other areas of their lives have changed since their retirement from the MLB.

Due to the sense of brotherhood that exists within the MLBAA, there was a great response and willingness to help their fellow alumnus with an important research project of this nature, and Mr. Worrell was able to successfully survey 194 members of the MLBAA.

Following the initial survey, Mr. Worrell determined which of the survey participants experienced both high and low identity loss after their retirement from the MLB. From there he was able to randomly select 20 participants to interview for a second phase of his project. Ten men who experienced high identity loss and ten who experienced low identity loss were invited to participate in this phase of the project.

By analyzing the 194 surveys along with the more in-depth responses from the 20 men interviewed, Mr. Worrell was able to better understand how the former MLB players view their athletic identity now and how those views may have changed and developed over time. Major themes emerged from the data, and those themes lead to specific indications of how this research may inform former MLB players entering retirement and even those players who are just beginning their career as professionals in the sport.

Mr. Worrell found that athletic identity loss and sudden identity foreclosure occurred for many of the former MLB players at the time of retirement. Several of the participants indicated that they felt they were no longer baseball players from the moment they walked off the field for the last time as a MLB player. Often players whose careers ended suddenly due to injury or other unforeseen circumstances experienced athletic identity loss and sudden identity foreclosure more seriously than those who played MLB for an extended period of time. Another theme that was relevant was the idea of crossover qualities that many of the participants alluded to in their responses. The hard work and

dedication that is required of an athlete to reach such a prestigious level often translated to skills that can be applied to competitive and exciting careers outside of baseball. For example, many of the former MLB players indicated that they went on to start their own business or enter a highly competitive career in sales and easily translated their drive and willingness to work hard into other areas of their lives.

In addition, though baseball was one of the most important aspects of their lives from early childhood into adulthood, these men often expressed that they kept in mind that the time would eventually come to retire, so being accepting of that fact is an important part of that transition. Many indicated that they had no job training or career planning beyond the intensive training required to play among the best in the world, so making the transition into a new career path can be challenging. For retired players who remained connected to the sport through coaching or in some other capacity often felt that certain aspects of their athletic identity remained intact. Also, many of the former MLB players indicated that although they no longer see themselves as baseball players, they do consider themselves to have evolved into other important identities such as coach, business owner, husband, or father.

In summary, the research into the identity perceptions of former MLB players shows that former MLB players redirect their athletic identity into other areas of their lives, and they are happier and more successful in their lives after retirement when they use the character traits that made them great baseball players to become great in other areas of their lives. Staying connected to the sport and helping other young players take their place in the spotlight also seems to be an important aspect of a smooth transition as is a strong connection to a support system of family and friends.

The implications of this project indicate that young athletes should consider how their crossover qualities might benefit them in job training or career planning after their time in MLB is complete. Further, trying to maintain strong relationships in spite of the challenging MLB schedule that all players must undergo may be a way to consciously create a strong support system that will be in place after retirement. Finally, it is important to recognize that many professional athletes will ultimately have to retire relatively early in their lives compared to other professionals, therefore it is best to plan accordingly and always be prepared for the unexpected. Transition into retirement can be difficult, but the experience of being considered among the best players in the world is a memory that is cherished by all former MLB players, and as Mark Worrell discovered in his research process, the MLBPA provides a sense of camaraderie and brotherhood that will last a lifetime.

Appendix G: Additional Tables used for Data Analysis

Table 10
Average Identity Ratings of AIMS-Plus Survey for Participants

Question	Mean %
Role Identity	
The importance of family deviation	96.99±Standard
The importance of friendships	86.29
The importance of athletics	64.21
The importance of religion	86.50
The importance of romance	75.88
Overall mean of role identity	
Self Identity	
I consider myself an athlete.	65.54
I have many goals related to sport.	51.14
Being an athlete is who I am and I want to make a career out of sport.	51.40
Being an athlete is an important part of who I am.	70.94
Overall	
Positive Affectivity	
When I participate in sport I am happy.	77.20
I get a sense of satisfaction when participating in sport.	74.44
My participation in sport is a very positive part of my life.	75.47
I feel good about myself when I play well in practice or competition.	72.40
Overall	
Negative Affectivity	
I feel bad about myself when I play poorly in practice or competition.	49.78
I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.	51.23
I feel badly when I fail to meet my athletic goals.	51.54
I would be very depressed if I were cut from the team and could not compete in sport.	49.03
Overall	
Exclusivity	
Sport is the most important part of my life.	26.86
I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else.	54.20
Sport is the only important thing in my life.	15.86
I typically organize my day so I can participate	

Table 10
Average Identity Ratings of AIMS-Plus Survey for Participants Continued

Question	Mean %
in sports. Overall	39.95
Social Identity	
Most of my friends participate in sport.	52.57
Other people see me as an athlete.	65.79
My family expects me to participate in sport.	47.66
It is important that other people know about my sport involvement.	38.95
I participate in sport for recognition/fame.	21.17
Overall	

Table 11

Do You Still Consider Yourself a Baseball Player? Do You Still Have Any Health Related Issues and/or Injuries Related to Your Time in MLB?

Current Identity				
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
	%	n	%	n
Do you still consider yourself a baseball player?	61	31.4	133	68.5
Do you still have any health related issues and/or injuries related to your time in the MLB?	136	70.1	58	29.8

Table 12

Sample Open-Ended Responses to Classify Identity for Self-Identity Coded as -1

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Self Identity	-1

When I was playing baseball I gave it 100% of my time after my family and it's a lot lower now.

I've moved past sports as a career and moved on. It helped shape me, but does not define me anymore- decreased.

These would have had lower values.

Yes, because my identity, priorities, and perspective have all changed and shifted back now. Baseball is what I did, not who I am and I no longer look to baseball to define my worth or value.

Felt stronger about my self identity when I was a player.

My responses are less now compared to what they were back then.... I have changed my mind set to adjust to a new life.

I am not an athlete anymore, it was a major part of my life, but I scored very low on these answers now.

Table 13

Sample Open-Ended Responses to Classify Identity for Self-Identity Coded as 0

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Self Identity	0

I'd say the same. It's a part of overall well being (exercise, healthy choices).

There was nothing better than being a big leaguer to me, I think the same way right now as I sit here today.
I feel like I did then.

I would answer these questions just like I did now.

My responses are just like they were back in the day.

If you would have asked me to answer these questions during my MLB career I would have provided you with these exact responses.

I have self identified as an athlete since I was a kid and a professional baseball player since I signed professionally and I am still in that same mind frame.

Everything I said here is where I would have been early in my MLB career.

Table 14

Sample Open-Ended Responses to Classify Identity for Self-Identity Coded as +1

Self Identity

+1

Well in this area they have increased and are more than I would have answered in my MLB career.

I prefer to still think of myself as an MLB player that coaches on the side for fun, so this one is up.

I'm still an athlete because I train like an athlete, so my answers are more now than in my MLB playing time.

Table 15

Sample Open-Ended Responses to Classify Identity for Positive Affectivity Coded as -1
Identity Classification Category Coded Score -1, 0, +1

Positive Affectivity	-1
<p>I'd guess my responses were higher back in the day, they've adapted.</p>	
<p>Less than before when I was a MLB player.</p>	
<p>Down currently.</p>	
<p>I must admit I was very happy when I played, but these scores are a lot lower in this stage of life.</p>	
<p>I would have to say that I was very happy and felt great about these responses when I played but not as much now that I have aged and retired from playing professional baseball as a player.</p>	
<p>I think a little different with barely lower responses here.</p>	
<p>Now that I am no longer playing, it has a different effect. When I played, its ingrained in you to base your emotions and feelings off of how you "performed". Now that I am in coaching, I still like competing but its different b/c its rewarding seeing others develop and overcome certain hurdles... meaningless here.</p>	

Table 16

Sample Open-Ended Responses to Classify Identity for Positive Affectivity Coded as 0

Positive Affectivity

0

Probably the same. The difference is now it's a part of overall well being (exercise, healthy choices), verses a definition of self.

There was nothing better than being a big leaguer to me, I think the same way right now as I sit here today.

Table 17

Sample Open-Ended Responses to Classify Identity for Positive Affectivity Coded as +1

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Positive Affectivity	+1
<p>I am still involved in professional baseball so I think my goals now are higher than as a young player. I want to work harder than anyone, and perform the best I can in what I'm doing now.</p> <p>I feel great when i play baseball because i will always be a mlb player! These are how i would have answered again and again and more today.... I'm always getting better.</p> <p>Well in this area they have increased but they are still more than I would have answered early in my MLB career.</p>	

Table 18

Sample of Open-Ended Responses to Classify Identity for Negative Affectivity

Coded as -1

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Negative Affectivity	-1
<p>Less....I would say that early in my life I would have been bothered by a lack of performance but now I realize that I am not the same athlete as I was when I was younger and don't get discouraged anymore about my diminished skills.</p>	
<p>There is def truth in the older you get, life has a way of teaching you wisdom. Now that I'm a little older and out of playing, I can take it in stride better and relax more. Early in your career, I was living from a short sided , small window of opportunity so there was more urgency. Plus, being a performance based career, that only adds to it all... not as much.</p>	
<p>I'm 44, and though I still have a lot of fun participating in men's league baseball, I'm also aware that my body isn't going to keep up with the young men I play against. I'm happy to still be able to compete, but success on the field now doesn't define me anymore like it did then.</p>	

Table 19

Sample of Open-Ended Responses to Classify Identity for Negative Affectivity Coded as 0

Negative Affectivity	0
	In retrospect I would have the same feelings.
	Same.
	About like then.
	I am the same today as I was back when I was a ball player I never got down on myself for not making a team or anything like that.
	I put everything I had into this game, I responded the same. Baseball was everything when I played, I'm about the same way now too.
	I played hard, shouldn't get down on myself....i feel how I did back then.

Table 20

Sample Responses to Classifying Identity Open-Ended Responses for Negative Affectivity Coded as +1

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Negative Affectivity	+1

Early in my career, I was told no many times but felt I could work hard enough to reach my goals. My attitude now increased because of these experiences.. I like when people doubt me...

I loved sports but realized early that it was like the stock market. You can't over react from one day to the next and you are not defined by the results. I am extremely competitive (grew up in a competitive family) and still love to win but don't take things to bed with me like I did then.

Higher...when injured, released, or performed poorly during my career I would sometimes get down... now I use those types of negative experiences as positive fuel to set goals and strive for other opportunities.

Table 21

Sample Responses to Classifying Identity Open-Ended Responses for Social Identity Coded as -1

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Social Identity	-1
	<p>I'm comfortable with myself and have other challenges in life now... meaning not as much.</p> <p>During my career, it was 100% that people identified me as an athlete. I have gotten away from that now and rarely talk about my career unless it is brought up by someone else or is relevant to a conversation, it's around 40% today.</p> <p>Oh yea.. way down. Most of my friends now are just regular people holding down regular jobs. While most know that I was an athlete it does not drive the relationship because most of my identity comes now from my children activities and my hobbies.</p> <p>A little bit lower again, but not by much I'd say would have scored higher back then.</p> <p>Less now, but just a little bit less.</p> <p>Hardly anyone these days knows I was a ball player and played with the best in the world.</p> <p>My social identity number decreased from when I was a young man- that is very interesting.</p>

Table 22

Sample Responses to Classifying Identity Open-Ended Responses for Social Identity Coded as 0

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Social Identity	0
<p>No different.</p> <p>The answers for this section would be virtually identical whether being considered early, or at the end of my career.</p> <p>Around the same answers then and now.</p> <p>About equal today as when I was MLB player</p> <p>Right on, same answers.</p> <p>Same answers for all of the above.</p> <p>Equal to during my playing career I would have to admit.</p> <p>I have and had these responses for as long as I can think back actually.</p> <p>Same answers I would have given you and answered back in the day.</p>	

Table 23

Sample Responses to Classifying Identity Open-Ended Responses for Social Identity Coded as +1

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Social Identity	+1

My career now is a baseball development facility so its obviously important for people to know about it. My career in the game can be leveraged for what I am doing now. I would def say, early on in my career and life, my dream of getting to the big leagues started off as pure reason b/c i loved the game. But then I realized it was a source of acceptance, adoration, and recognition and it went up from there after retirement to where it is today.

Because it was my life and my living depended on my success, I was proud of my life in sport, and being recognized was a normal occurrence. It was positive then but even more so now.

Table 24

Sample Responses to Classifying Identity Open-Ended Responses for Exclusivity Coded as -1

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Exclusivity	-1
<p>Now, I have family that I must take care of so priorities have definitely changed equating to exclusivity going down.</p> <p>Completely different, regressed. Now my involvement is purely recreational and fan based. Most of my sport interaction is through my children now.</p> <p>I love to watch sports still and but other things occupy my time such as kids events (most are sports related) and making sure the house is running smooth so my wife and kids can go about their jobs or responsibilities without too many distractions. It was more about myself and working on baseball skills when I was a player, not the case now.</p> <p>All of these answers would be closer to 100 early in my career, but no higher than 70 here.</p> <p>All would show you more for then.</p> <p>Early in my career it was def the most important and majority of my time spent thinking about it. Now, my faith and family come well before that... less.</p> <p>Almost all 0's again wow I didn't think it would be this low I still get out and throw the baseball around and hit whenever I can because I still enjoy it but these aren't at the level they used to be because I don't have as much time to participate now.</p>	

Table 25
Sample Responses to Classifying Identity Open-Ended Responses for Exclusivity Coded as 0

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Exclusivity	0
<p style="text-align: center;">Same</p> <p style="text-align: center;">It's just how I am and it's just the same as it's always been.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I answered the same then and now, I love baseball, what else can I say.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Baseball had a huge part of my life and still does, so it's equal.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Baseball will always be very dear to me, my feelings are just like how they were then.</p>	

Table 26
Sample Responses to Classifying Identity Open-Ended Responses for Exclusivity Coded as +1

Identity Classification Category	Coded Score -1, 0, +1
Exclusivity	+1
<p>All of these answers would be closer to 70 early in my career, but no closer to 100 here.</p> <p>So it actually did increase.</p> <p>Way up today!</p>	

Table 27

Sample of Open-Ended Responses Coded as, "Once a player always a player."

Coded Identity Category	Response
<i>Once a player always a player.</i>	Once a baseball player, always a baseball player.
	Yes! I worked for many years and extremely hard to play in MLB. I love baseball, I understand baseball and baseball is in my blood. I have been and always will be a baseball player.
	Yes. I play men's league, and baseball is STILL the activity/profession I know most about. I know and can still do more baseball related things than 99% of the population, which is still a source of pride for me.
	Yes. When people talk to me about my broadcasting, I always say, " I don't consider myself a professional broadcaster... Just a player talking about the game."
	Yes, I have always been a ball player and always will be... who would think different?
	Yes I am! I am still affiliated with baseball because I love the game.
	You bet, I put in too much effort not to!
	Yes- I pitched in the major leagues and that makes me a major leaguer for the rest of my life.
	Yes- since I am old guy now I can still consider myself a baseball player because I pitched for a lot of years in the bigs.

Table 27

Sample of Open-Ended Responses Coded as, "Once a Player Always a Player."

Continued

Coded Identity Category	Response
<i>Once a player always a player.</i>	Yes, as much baseball as I've played in my life, I'll always be a baseball player!
	Yes- I'll always feel like baseball is a big part of me and it has been a big part of my life for a very long time.
	Always will, I grew up a baseball player and reached me childhood dream, ill always be a baseball player and I am proud of that fact.

Table 28

Sample of Open-Ended Responses Coded as, "I'm a Former or Retired Baseball Player."

Coded Identity Category	Response
<hr/> <i>I'm a former or retired baseball player.</i>	I consider myself a former baseball player.
	No, I consider myself a former player. While being a baseball player will always remain part of who I am, I strive not to let it be all that defines me.
	Yes, I will always consider myself a baseball player, now it's just former. That's who I was, that's what gave me everything I have today.
	I still consider myself a Major Leaguer, yes I do, because it is something they will never take away from me. As baseball, if I am not playing I don't hold on to that tag so for now, I say no.
	Not anymore, now I am a retired baseball player and officer.
	No, after your retirement you cant be a baseball player, you gotta turn into a retired baseball player so that the current players get some respect.

Table 29

Sample of Open-Ended Responses Coded as, "I'm a Baseball Coach Now."

Coded Identity Category	Response
<i>I'm a baseball coach now.</i>	NO. My arm was injured in spring of 75. Didn't treat those injuries back then. If you couldn't go, they replaced you. I got to the big leagues quick, hurt my arm, and then worked my way back down. I did get back to AAA in '78 before being asked if I wanted to coach. I did that till '89 when I started scouting in Fall of '89 for the MLB Scouting Bureau., then worked my way into coaching.
	Yes- I retired and decided I should do new things with my life and then wanted to become a college baseball coach so I did.
	No, now I am a baseball coach and baseball instructor.
	No, now I tell people I am a coach and retired if they ask me what I do.
	No I do not-I consider myself a coach now.
	Interesting question but I would have to say no I do not consider myself a baseball player and that's because I am a coach now and that is my job. My job was to execute pitches and now its to make sure my pitchers execute their pitches.

Table 30

Sample of Open-Ended Responses Coded as, "Now That Time Has Passed."

Coded Identity Category	Response
<i>Now that time has passed.</i>	<p>Nope. Its part of my past but I no longer am a player.</p>
	<p>No, the day I retired I knew that I was moving forward and leaving that part of my life behind.</p>
	<p>Not anymore. I did for at least the first 4-5 years after playing. It took me a long time to not identify myself as a baseball player anymore.</p>
	<p>No. While I stay current with MLB, I know my days are gone but I do rely on my time as player to talk with younger players about the game on a regular basis but away from those times it is low on my totem pole to announce that I was a ballplayer. I am not afraid to use it when I see something going (Usually Baseball related) on that I might not agree with but I like being it the background for the most part.</p>
	<p>No, I retired back in 1999 and knew I wouldn't play ever again.</p>
	<p>No, I gave that life up once I retired and wanted to spend more time with my family.</p>
	<p>No, when I quit the final time I realized it was all over for me in this lifetime.</p>
	<p>No I do not because I can't perform like I did when I was a young ballplayer and like the professional baseball players on tv now.</p>
	<p>This is a hard question for me to consider, but I have to say no. Why? I don't prepare myself to be a baseball player anymore.</p>

Table 31

Sample of Open-Ended Responses Coded as, "I Am . . . A New Identity Now."

Coded Identity Category	Response
<i>No, I am a . . . new identity now.</i>	No because I'm a husband and business owner which is more important to me.
	No, I gave that life up once I retired and wanted to spend more time with my family.
	Nope, I consider myself a dad, husband, and coach these days and a retired mlb player.
	No, I look at myself as a father and husband first.
	Not now-I am many other things now instead of a ball player first.
	No/ I view myself as a lot of other things before a baseball player now.
	I am not a baseball player now, I am a father, a husband, and a firefighter.
	No because I'm a husband and business owner which is more important to me.
	No I used to be but I have other things going on now.
	No I do not because I view myself and my life as a firefighter- and although baseball was a major part of me it's just been a long time since I was a baseball player.
	No.... my sons are baseball players and I am a baseball fan at this point. I appreciate my past as a baseball player but players have to know when to move on with their lives and careers.... it happens at some point for every player.
	No.... I consider myself a business man now and that's where I put all of my career efforts.

Table 32

*Results to Open-Ended Question, “Do You Still Consider Yourself a Baseball Player?”
Yes or No in Relation to Years of Service in Major League Baseball (MLB)*

Total	< 1 Year		1-4 Yrs.		5-9 Yrs.		10-14 Yrs.		15+ Yrs.		n
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Yes 29	8	4	19	8.7	18	8.7	12	5.6	4	2	61
No 71	28	14	48	25	31	16	26	11	2	1	133
Total Total	<1 Year		1-4 Yrs		5-9 Yrs.		10-14 Yrs.		15+ Yrs		n
%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
100	36	18	67	34	49	25	38	17	6	3	194

Table 33
Results to Open-Ended Question, "Do You Still Consider Yourself a Baseball Player?"
by Age

Age Range	Always		Former		Coach		No		New ID		
Total	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
30-34	1	.5	3	2	0	0	2	1	1	.5	7
35-44	14	7	5	2.5	4	2	26	13	7	3.6	56
45-54	16	8	2	1	7	3.6	15	7.7	6	3	46
55-64	12	6	2	1	2	1	16	8	9	2.5	41
65+	13	7	4	2	3	2	19	9.7	5	2.5	44
Total	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
194	56	28%	16	8%	16	8%	78	40%	28	14%	100

Table 34

Sample Responses of Employment of Participating Retired MLB Players

Coded Career Field	Response
Broadcasting	<p>Baseball broadcasting, Minor League Baseball manager, MLB coach. Yes, radio broadcasting. Broadcasting, radio host; fitness instructor media intern, broadcasting color analyst, sports game day tv analyst.</p>
Business Entrepreneur	<p>Yes. Went right into coaching for 4 years and now run a small business out of my house. Owner/operator at athletics co. I played independent ball, and started my own entrepreneuring ventures. I have my own custom home building company. Yes, started clothing business. Baseball manager, baseball broadcast, owned my restaurant. Restaurant owner. Yes- I had a plumbing business for a lot of years. I own and operate a national baseball tournament organization for youth baseball players.</p>

Table 34

Sample Responses of Employment of Participating Retired MLB Players Continued

Coded Career Field	Response
	<p>I currently run a baseball academy and work as a mortgage expert.</p> <p>I am a professional baseball coach and own a baseball academy with other pro players as employees.</p>
Coach	<p>Yes I did, college baseball coach.</p> <p>Sure did- youth baseball coaching facility instructor.</p> <p>I tried my hand at coaching and have coached at many levels throughout baseball. Pitching coach.</p> <p>Sure did, I was a college baseball coach for many years so I could stay connected with baseball.</p> <p>Coaching, coaching, and more coaching.</p>
Management	<p>Yes I worked at a warehouse as a stocker and worked my way up to manager.</p> <p>I am a Facilities Manager and have worked here since a few months after I retired from MLB.</p> <p>After I retired I work as a bank teller assistant manager, and manager at a bank.</p> <p>I became a warehouse manager.</p> <p>Yes, assistant manager and manager in a grocery store.</p>
Major League Baseball	<p>VARIOUS MLB JOBS- BENCH COACH, MANAGER, ETC.</p> <p>MLB scouting work.</p> <p>Sure did... served as a scout and hitting coach for two clubs.</p> <p>Various jobs for MLB affiliated teams.</p> <p>I worked all throughout pro baseball about everywhere you can think of I've been.</p>

Table 34

Sample Responses of Employment of Participating Retired MLB Players Continued

Coded Career Field	Response
Real Estate	<p>I retired from baseball as I was not interested in managing in the Minor leagues and instead started my own real estate company which was very successful over the years to my full retirement five year ago. Real Estate.</p> <p>I have worked in real estate for over 25 years now.</p> <p>I have worked as a realtor since I retired from MLB and made a good living doing so.</p>
Sales	<p>Sales professional.</p> <p>Yes, sales/ business development officer.</p> <p>Ortho sales.</p> <p>Yes- insurance sales.</p> <p>My first job was as a technician and later I moved into sales jobs.</p>

Table 35

Dominant Professions of Retired MLB Players

Profession	n	%
Coach	42	21.6
Business Entrepreneur	33	17
Major League Baseball	26	13
Sales	25	12.8
Real Estate	11	5.6

Table 36

NVivo Nodes Used for Interviews and Number of Coded Entries

Node	# of Coded Entries
General	
Advice	26
Career Planning	29
Drafted	9
Education	4
Importance of Game	32
Job Training	20
Negatives	87
Peer/Family Acceptance	19
Positives	257
Religion	34
Watching MLB	27

Table 37
Interview Comments Coded as Positive

Positive Comment

That would be the last time I played and I appreciated the journey that baseball took me on while the journey lasted.

I have started a new life and been at this new life for about seven years now, so yea it's all good now and was back when I played ball too.

The pay that I made . . . I loved being able to provide for my family like that. It was something so special and I . . . I also liked how my kids looked up to me and told everyone I was a Major Leaguer . . . that made me feel good too though.

Oh well I am proud of everything that I did and proud of playing. I think it was a good career and I can tell you that retiring wasn't a tough thing for me because of the coaching.

The best part for me . . . the best part for me was being treated like a Major Leaguer and the great teammates that I played with. Those guys were like brothers to me and we had fun together. We kept in touch for many years after we played because we had a close connection when we played and we all knew that too.

I had all the skills and the baseball I.Q to set me up for the coaching side. It was perfect for me to do coaching and I loved it. I became a coach and ran away with the opportunity.

I felt lucky and relieved.

I just wanted to think positive and think like I could . . . I mean think positively for the future without being a baseball player now.

Current feelings . . . I think it gets easier as time goes on.

I think I'm in a better place now that I . . . I am removed a few more years from playing, time makes the transition easier for me and some of the other guys I know say the same thing, as I'm sure you can relate to.

Table 37
Interview Comments Coded as Positive Continued

Positive Comment

I love my job and I love my career, what I do and everything.

Luckily, you know, I'm not in that situation and I'm really happy with where I'm at and where I'm heading.

I think the best part was just competing and knowing I was one of the best in the world. I loved playing, I loved a lot of stuff about baseball.... Striking guys out, being a member of the team... you know being one the guys.

As time went on, I became more and more comfortable and you know, I guess I settled in a lot more.

Just having the support system of my wife and family and... you know my neighbor and boss, it really helped me to make the successful transition... otherwise you know, I'm not sure how I might have done it.

I would describe it as... it as rewarding and fulfilling. I like the challenge that sales presents to me and it keeps me constantly thinking of ways to make money.

The conversations that me and my wife talked over and we discussed it before it happened... we said that we would make the best of it when I retired from baseball... and I knew she was always right there for me... so that made me feel like it would be good to go when it's my time.

Everything. I loved baseball, I loved MLB... I loved my teammates, I loved everything about it.

Table 38
Interview Comments Coded as Negative

Negative Comment
<p>It was really a hard thing for me to overcome.</p>
<p>I was sad that I was optioned and felt like I needed more of a chance to show ‘em what I got...</p>
<p>That’s simple, when the game is over for you and you have to move on. It has to happen to everyone and everyone deals with it different. A lot of guys... it’s hard to leave because they love it and had so much into.... Into the game.</p>
<p>It’s just not the Major Leagues for me... so it’s been difficult in some ways.</p>
<p>I wouldn’t say that I have all the way adjusted here today. Even when you’re a free agent and have some MLB time, you can still make a solid living... like I did for many years. My income today... it’s about how I was making in my early free agent times... so I have had to adjust and make differences in my life and my family’s life. It’s not always easy man... reality isn’t always fair.</p>
<p>I was.... I was definitely saddened by that decision.</p>
<p>It’s hard to leave something that is and was so important to you in your life... and something that you live as a lifestyle for so long.</p>
<p>It’s not easy to turn the page so quick...</p>
<p>They had me playing off and on, I was a little used to that but it was harder for me later in my career. I didn’t have the type of year that I should have had, my numbers were down some, and the team didn’t ask me to come back for the next Spring Training.</p>
<p>I mean that I knew this was coming for a long time but it didn’t... it still did not make it any easier for me to deal with.</p>

Table 38
Interview Comments Coded as Negative Continued

Negative Comment
My feelings were sadness.... I cried thinking about it and I remembered all those good times and I'll never forget that.
As a Major Leaguer, I was the best player... one of the best players anywhere... I knew that I could remember this but it was going to be a different feeling without putting on the uniform to play every day and go to Spring Training every year. Change was about to happen and a change very different from all I knew and baseball which I loved... it was all going to be different.
Baseball meant a great deal to me... I knew that a part of me was lost for good and it made me sad to think about it. I didn't want to leave and retire... as some of my injuries hurt more and more... I had surgery it became time to do it... to hang them up for my career.
I said to myself this has to be one of the most awful things I could have happen. Just playing baseball since I was a little kid made me want to play baseball forever and I put so much into playing baseball. I felt pain then... because I knew it was over.
It's still a sore subject that I don't really get fully into even now.
I even missed a lot of family time.... I had to travel because my career made me travel.
I was battling through some injuries of different sorts down in the minors.. just battling and battling... and finally the team gave up on me and released me.
I suspected that it could happen in the next few years, but not that at that time... I didn't see that one coming though.
It's like... it's like being dropped into a cave with no light and nothing to pull you out... at first you're lost and it takes a little bit to find your way... well find your light.... Find your path.

Table 39
Interview Comments Coded as Importance of The Game

Importance of the Game	Comment
	<p>I felt this way because I had so much inside me... so much passion inside me that wanted to do nothing else other than play professional baseball.</p>
	<p>It's a part of your whole life, a part of your DNA.</p>
	<p>Back then baseball was extremely important for me. It was my full identity and how everyone knew me.</p>
	<p>Baseball was in my blood... I loved baseball... I enjoyed it and I was good at it. I always said I was going to grow up and make a career out of playing baseball and it was... I was proud to do that for all those years.</p>
	<p>My last year was 1988... baseball was very much important to me... it still made me feel like I was on top of the world, to be a MLB player. I'd go off to say that baseball was the most important part of my life after my wife of course. I would eat, sleep, and breathe to play baseball...</p>
	<p>Basically I gave so much time and put so much into it, it consumed the majority of my life. Moving here, moving there, being here, being there, it was my life pretty much. About everything was influenced by my decision to play professional baseball.</p>
	<p>MLB was as important as the air I breathe back then, I didn't want to do anything else...</p>
	<p>I put my soul into baseball, working out, traveling, and living the life of a baseball player.</p>
	<p>I knew myself as a baseball player and that's how I made living, made money to pay my bills and live. Baseball was one of the most important areas of my life... after my faith, kids, and wife.</p>
	<p>It was big, as big as life itself. Everything I did was about being a baseball player and then later on a professional baseball player.</p>

Table 40

Interview Comments Coded as Job Training and Career Planning

Job Training and Career Planning Comments

The job training... I wasn't in any job training.. I never considered it because I was so.... So crazy about doing my training and getting into MLB and sticking there.

And the job training, that's another thing I didn't get into it... none of that either.

Job training... my parents would tell me do different things for them and I went to school and I played sports.... That was it. Job training was not part of it.

Job trainings?... I wasn't doing any other job trainings than playing baseball... that was enough of a job for me to do everyday all day.

The job trainings.... I didn't do that much other than work at a gas station for a friend's dad and do some stuff... little stuff, you know to make some extra cash while I was playing baseball. Everything revolved around baseball you see.

I never participated in any type of training before my MLB career or before it ended.

Haha... job training, I didn't know anyone that did job training during their career... either you want to be a baseball player and you give it your effort or you did something else in the world.

So, the job training wasn't a thing.... It didn't really occur.

I didn't have enough time to job train.... Baseball was demanding and I wanted to play in the Major Leagues... I knew that was hard so I trained for that.. trained really hard and gave all my effort towards that.

Job training? No, not at all. Hahah, it was just baseball... all you can take baseball, baseball, baseball. But it was good for me, I didn't mind it at all.

I should have done more job training, but I didn't think that far down the line. Baseball was my priority... really my only concern, so it was just

Table 40

Interview Comments Coded as Job Training and Career Planning Continued

Job Training and Career Planning Comments

wondering how I could make myself a better player and make it to the Big Leagues and then stay there once I made it there.

I'd think that my college degree set me up for owning my own business... my major was Business.

Table 41
Interview Comments Coded as Watching MLB

Watching MLB Comments

I don't go to any games anymore, I just don't have time for that right now.

It's just not the same, I was just that guy.. or one of those guys down there playing last year... I don't watch baseball right now... I will again one day though, I just don't know when though yet.

I'm fine with it... it doesn't worry me. I like watching the college baseball games a little bit more but I'll sometimes watch the Major Leagues too. It's good; baseball is fun to watch.

I think I felt this way because I really had a love for the game but I knew that love would be different as a fan and not a professional player.

I'll still watch a few games a season but my kids aren't really that interested in baseball so I gravitate towards their interests and you know...

Aw no... when I first retired I didn't want to watch... I missed it too much then... but it's different when you get older.

I say that should be me, sh**. No, I'm cool, I watch and think about the times I was out there and it brings me back to some good memories.

I'm always around the game still... I've been in this game for a long time, so for me it's just another day.

I love to watch still... I just love baseball, I loved it when I was a pitcher and doing that... and I love to watch it now that I am a retired guy just watching in the bleachers or at the television set.

I watch baseball all the time, I watch my kids play, I watch a game here and there and sometimes I'll even head out to a game. I don't see a big deal about watching the games or anything like that, I still enjoy it. I'll tell you what, it's nice to watch a game when you don't have to watch one everyday of your life.

Did I? Well I gave myself a little time get over the whole thing... a few years, it just takes time for guys I think.

Oh, it's cool with me. I can watch and it's nice to see... I understand everything that's going on obviously.... But I don't watch all the time or

Table 41

Interview Comments Coded as Watching MLB Continued

Watching MLB Comments

plan out going to the games. If it's on, I'll watch... but the days of me planning my days out for baseball aren't here anymore.

As a scout and manager, I've watched plenty of games into retirement. I am used to it, it's great to watch the rising talents in baseball have their chance and play to their abilities. All guys that play in the minors have their time, I had mine, now they are having theirs, so it's good for me to be around and see these guys develop.

Hmmm... I feel alright... I like it. At first maybe I was somewhat bitter about me being in the outside.... But now, I'm okay... I'm happy and I watch when it's on or whatever.

I might have taken a little bit of time... a little bit of time off from watching.... Like a year or a little bit... but most of the time I was always watching and enjoying my time to watch.

Table 42
Interview Comments Coded as Advice

Advice Comments

I'd say... I would say play as long as you can. A job out in the real world is a heck of a lot different... but you have to see it in your own head.. it's all about their way of life and what they want and what they need too.

Every man is going to do what's the best for him and the family he has. Don't make that decision one day just because you struck out five times or you had to give up three homeruns... think it through, make a decision that you can wake up to everyday for the rest of your life... so it's a wise decision.

Think about doing some coaching.... I decided to do coaching and it was a great way for me to end my career and show youngsters how to play the game of baseball. Baseball is always going to need coaches and who better than Major Leaguers is what I always thought.

You know... hmmm I would just tell him to follow his heart, Only he knows when the time is right for him and what he wants to do with his life... everyone is different and has circumstances that are different from you know, other ball players. So yea, just think about it... think a lot and see if it's worth it.

Look long and hard... see why you're doing it and make sure you make it the right way for you. Once you make that decision, there's no going back on it. A few guys do... but that's not... that's not working out for them most of the time. Make sure you know it's your time before you cash it in.

There's no where better... just if you have to, then you can do it. But if you don't have to, hold off and play. The real world isn't all rosy, it can be a strange place at first. Play ball baby.. it's what you were born to do, just play ball baby.

Oh brother, make sure it's worth it, the real world can be cruel... and it's not fun.

Don't do it.... No I would tell that player to make that decision on their own and listen to their own heart. There are plenty of other people that can give you good advice.... The advice they give you isn't always what is best for you and you have to look yourself in the mirror at the end of every day and make your life how you wanted it to be lived. Just think about your options and take it all from there... that is what I say.

Table 42

Interview Comments Coded as Advice Continued

Advice Comments

Do what it is that makes you happy... if it makes you happy to retire then go ahead and retire.... MLB doesn't have a shortage of players that want to play this game, the game is always getting bigger and bigger and getting more fans and good players everywhere. If it makes you happy to retire, retire, do something else and make it for yourself in whatever else you do.

There are a lot of jobs in this world.... If you spend all of your time going somewhere or doing something that you don't like, work to do a job that you will like. We have a lot of options in this life and spending so much time to do something that you don't want should be a last case scenario.

Hmm...persistence and dedication are keys... figure out where you want to go and work your tail off until you get there.

Give yourself a plan to fall back to... it will make your retirement less stressful and help you get on your feet quicker than if not. That is the best advice that I can give a player that may be retiring soon.

I'd tell him to try and hang in there... baseball is a lot of ups and downs.... Like a roller coaster... ride that roller coaster as long as you can until you get old, then go ahead and retire. That's what I tried to do and it worked out for me.

The game is constantly churning out newer and younger players. You have to see this and be ready for it to happen to you. It happens to some quicker than others and I wanted to make myself know that.

Well if you're thinking about it, it might be because you want to do something else. You know better than anyone, you do. Be truthful to yourself and see what else you could do. If it's something good, do it. All these guys playing now on TV will be done one day, you know just like me and you. The time comes and goes and it will for all these guys.

Hmmmm... I'd say if you knew where you were going after you retired do it... if not, hold off keep playing and form a plan, it's a good idea and will make it easier for you when you retire and start your new life... and that new career.

Table 42

Interview Comments Coded as Advice Continued

Advice Comments

I should have prepared and did some research about after my retirement, it just didn't happen that way. I think you get so consumed by your baseball career that you forget that it will end one day and you don't think about it. I'm not sure if you don't want to think about it or you just think it will come easy to you or what, you just don't do it.

I know a lot of guys that go into baseball jobs after their baseball playing career and most of these guys are happy with what they do.... The decision that they made.

Leaving Major League Baseball is a tough one, if that's what you're thinking, do it and see what's on the other side. But remember, the grass isn't always greener on the other side either.

You have to be honest within yourself, if you can do that, then you're a step ahead of many people out there.

I wanted to do something positive, help out others, but man it just was something I had to take time, be patient... let things develop.

Without me knowing his life and everything like that... I'd tell him be careful and weigh the possibilities... life is very different when retirement from baseball sets in... sometimes it works out nice and other times it doesn't work out so nice.

Retirement happens to all baseball players one day... take your time and decide what it is that you really want to do in your life. If there is something else that you want to do, go for it. We have the ability to do this, living in a great country like America, to make decisions for ourselves and it's a freedom we are given in this great country.

Consider your options... weigh them out.... And make the decision based on what you say is best for you... and the family if there is one in your life. It's not an easy thing to consider... but it's something ball players go through.

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Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.