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The retirement experiences of former elite female netball players

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**THE RETIREMENT EXPERIENCES OF
FORMER ELITE FEMALE NETBALL PLAYERS**

BY

J.L. Redmond B.App.Sc. (Sports Science)

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of**

Master of Applied Science (Sports Science)

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

Abstract

Research to date on retirement from sport has been dominated by the study of United States, male, collegiate sports. Studies within Australia, which has a substantially different community based sport system, are just commencing. This study provided an insight into retirement from sport as it was experienced by former Western Australian elite female netball players. Using a qualitative interpretive approach a three stage interview process was employed to capture the individual experiences of each of the 15 participants. The interviewees were also asked to recommend interventions or strategies that netball associations could employ to assist players in their transition out of elite netball. Inductive analysis of the data revealed three factors experienced by the athletes retiring from elite netball: (a) it was an individual experience; (b) it was a transition which included a phase of assimilation; and (c) the athlete identity remained after retirement. Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition was used to guide the study and analyse the findings of this study. Nine strategies for implementation by the Netball Associations and players are provided.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in text.

Signature:

Janice L. Re~~o~~mond

Date:.....10.2.95.....

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background to the Study

Research on sport retirement began in the 1960s in response to published anecdotal and journalistic literature which suggested that athletes found the process of retirement from sport to be traumatic. This negative perspective gave rise to the use of gerontological theories (the study of aging) and thanatological theories (the study of dying) from the sociological field to investigate and explain sport retirement. The relevance of these theories was questioned by Coakley (1983) who suggested that they were too negative in nature and retirement from sport could, in fact, be a rebirth for many athletes. This prompted an expanded approach in subsequent research.

Reflecting this change and the possibility of sport retirement being part of a process rather than an ending, researchers are now considering other theories, particularly the construct "transition" (Schlossberg, 1984) from the counselling field, as a framework for understanding sport retirement.

Expanding the scope of the research has not only provided a more balanced view of the topic but has also created an awareness of the complex maze of factors which have the potential to influence a particular athlete's experience of retirement from sport.

Netball - A Brief Review

A brief review of netball including its development and history will: (a) demonstrate its importance to Australian sport; (b) show its relevance to the study of retirement from sport; and (c) outline some of the significant changes that have occurred to netball and Australia during the time the participants in this study played elite netball.

Netball development in Australia and Western Australia.

The game netball, which was known as "Women's Basket Ball" until August, 1970 is believed to have been first played in Australia in 1913 in Victorian Primary Schools (Hyland, 1977?). It is now the most popular female participant sport in Australia (Australian Sports Commission, 1993). Australia has dominated the Netball World Championships since its inauguration in 1963.

Netball originally started in Western Australia in 1927 at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) (Y. Auckett, personal communication, November 4, 1994). In 1927, Western Australia, represented by the Basket Ball Association of Perth (later changed to Western Australian Women's Basket Ball Association), became a foundation member of the All Australian Women's Basket Ball Association (Hyland, 1977?). By 1993, netball in Western Australia had the second highest player registration of all sports with 41,121 registrations (Western Australian Ministry of Sport and Recreation, 1993).

The National Championships (now called the All Australian Netball Tournament), in which teams from around

Australia compete for The Elix Shield, is an annual event and has been held every year since 1928. Two exceptions to this exist. Firstly, the year 1937 when the Melbourne polio epidemic prevented play and secondly, during the period 1940-45 when interstate travel due to World War II was restricted. Western Australia has been represented in all tournaments except during the nine year period 1930 to 1938 when they did not reaffiliate due to financial restrictions (K. Massey, personal communication, October 31, 1994). Western Australia has traditionally ranked highly in the National Tournament and has provided many Australian team members. In recent years, however, Western Australia has fallen behind the majority of the other Australian states. The reasons for this downturn are unclear and not within the sphere of this study.

Netball was introduced into the Western Australian schools in the 1920s and by 1942 it had become the chief form of competitive sport among the girls of the metropolitan schools and was also played in the country areas (Ryan, 1989). Since 1928, Western Australia had been invited annually to send a schoolgirls' netball team to the Australian Schoolgirls' competition. However, it was not until 1956 that the first West Australian State Schoolgirls' netball team participated and were runners up in the competition. In 1957, Western Australia was host of the championships, and won (Ryan, 1989).

In 1961, the State netball body moved to the Matthew's Netball Centre in Floreat. This change centralised the competition which had previously been dispersed in nine or

4

ten different locations. This new netball centre included eight hard courts which are now the standard playing surface. In 1967, Perth was host of the World Netball Championships. In 1984 the Western Australian Institute of Sport was opened and netball was one of the sports represented.

Two other major competitions have also had their impact on Western Australian netball and these are: the Super League National competition which started in 1985 and the Quit State Netball League competition, which began in 1989. Western Australia is now represented in the Super League by the winner of the Quit State Netball League competition (C. Jones, personal communication October 31, 1994).

In January, 1990 the W.A. Netball Association (Inc.) was formed and located in Osborne Park. In January, 1994 a change to the constitution saw a further decentralisation of netball; to amalgamate the current 80 associations into 11 regional associations. This change has made administration of the sport more manageable and also allowed players a choice of the district in which they play.

Some of the significant historical changes that have occurred in netball and Australia over the last 45 years, have affected the experiences of the women participating in this research and were therefore important background to the present study and are discussed below. In netball these include: (a) the number of other sports and types of netball available; and (b) structural changes within the

sport. Historical changes which affected Australia include both changes in the social mores regarding women's sport and their role in society.

Alternative sports and types of netball.

Initially, netball and hockey were the only two team sports available to women during the winter months in Australia. This has changed in more recent times with the introduction of other games such as women's basketball and volleyball. Netball, however, remains one of the highest participant sports in Australia. Netball was considered, and probably still is today, a more feminine sport than its early rival hockey. As it was played on Saturdays it also meant that it did not interfere with other domestic responsibilities of the women who played or their mothers who often looked after the grandchildren. Saturday was the day when men played or watched football and therefore the women were "free" to go to netball. The sport flourished as a sport for women, run by women and was one of the first eight sports to be introduced into the Australian Institute of Sport when it was established in 1981.

Structural changes within netball.

Traditionally, during the development of netball men were not allowed to coach, umpire, play or hold office. Since 1983, competition for men has developed rapidly and culminated in the formation of the All Australian Men's Netball Association. Mixed netball is also played at community recreation centres and commercial indoor sports centres around Australia. The inclusion of men into netball was not achieved without resistance. An example of

this resistance is evident in the comments made by Mrs Helen Edmunds (cited in Jobling and Barham, 1988, p. 97), who was, at the time of making the following statement, the Executive Director of the All Australian Netball Association: "Netball is a sisterhood and let no man put asunder". As netball remained controlled by women for women during its early development it has provided women with a sport in which they can participate at all levels, including playing, coaching and administration. Through the success of the women who have developed netball in Australia, it now provides a unique forum for the study of elite Australian women athletes.

The basic structure of netball has changed considerably over the years and the procedure for the development of young talented players has changed along with the sport. In the early structure there were only three phases of elite play, (a) Schoolgirls'; (b) State Open; and (c) Australian. While playing at elite level the players are also required to play for a club team and be affiliated with the Netball Association. There is now a much more complex structure in place. Figure 1 illustrates the extent of these changes, showing the structure as it existed in the 1940s and the structure which exists in 1994.

of Sport programs. This change in practice makes the identification of who is elite in this sport difficult, especially when you are seeking the experiences of a number of generations of players, as is the case in this research. The inclusion of State, Australian and Australian Institute of Sport program netball players was made to ensure that no elite players were eliminated from this study.

Netball, is therefore an appropriate sport in which to investigate sport retirement experiences of former elite female athletes in Australia for the following reasons: (a) it is popular amongst female athletes; (b) Australian netball has a very successful record at international competitions; and (c) the sport structure is receptive to the development of elite players.

Historical issues in Australia.

Historical events and social mores in Australia have changed over the last 45 years and these changes influenced the experiences of the netball players in this study. In particular, the expectation of early marriage (example, aged 20) and child birth, accompanied by domestic duties, influenced the time span that women were able to participate in elite sport. The limited number of career paths available to women, particularly those who could accommodate the amount of training and the interstate or overseas tours which were part of the elite netball environment, gave the career priority over continued elite netball.

Over the years that the netball study encompassed, the "acceptable" age for retiring from elite netball changed

along with changes in social beliefs and netball's development as a sport. The acceptable age for the netball players in this study ranged from 21 to 30 years. In 1981, with the introduction of Australian Institute of Sport netball, the philosophy changed toward the development of younger players, who trained in Australian Institute of Sport programs around Australia, at the expense of older more experienced players.

The Significance of the Study

Most of the available literature to date has investigated the United States, male, collegiate athletic sports. The system of sport is considerably different in organisation from the Australian community based system. A major difference between the two systems is that the United States system only allows elite athletes a four year collegiate scholarship after which, except for a small minority, their sports careers are terminated. The Australian sports system allows the elite athlete to continue at elite level as long as they are competitive to do so. Table 1 shows the differences in the two countries populations and sports systems.

Table 1

Comparison of Australian and United States
Sports Systems

Characteristic	AUSTRALIA	UNITED STATES
Total Population	17,745,800*	242,709,873**
National Sports Centre	AIS	USOC***
College Based Sports Program	No	Yes
Players drawn from outside National or college based training centres	Yes	No
Expected sports life of athlete	Open	4 years

Note:* (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1994)

** (Hunter, 1994)

*** United States Olympic Committee

These fundamental differences in population size, access to sports facilities and services, and duration of participation suggest that the Australian sports system needs to be investigated in order to determine the experiences of the Australian athletes when retiring from sport. Research is emerging in Australia, such as Hawkins and Blann's (1993) study of athlete and coach career development and transition. They investigated the career planning awareness of 56 athletes and seven coaches from the Australian Institute of Sport and the Victorian Institute of Sport. Their study found that the athletes would like assistance in personal and career assessment through individual and small group counselling both during and after their playing careers. Further research is required to determine the applicability of research

findings from other countries to Australian sports and athletes.

There has been little research into the retirement experiences of the elite female athlete. Allison and Meyer (1988) investigated the retirement experiences of elite, female, professional tennis players and discovered that the majority of these athletes found the experience presented an opportunity to enjoy activities previously precluded by life on the tennis circuit. A few empirical studies have included both males and females in their research (Blinde and Stratta, 1992; Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985; Sinclair and Orlick, 1993; Werthner and Orlick, 1986). Of these, Greendorfer and Blinde were the only ones to report any difference between the responses of the male and female athletes. They found that while the female athletes placed continued and unchanging levels of importance to their sport, the male athletes' interest in sport continued to decline. Greendorfer and Blinde suggest that this may be due to their different reasons for participating. While male athletes claim that their primary reason for participation was to receive a scholarship, the female athletes acknowledge "love of the sport" and "sport as social experience". Greendorfer and Blinde suggest that this may support the contention that intrinsic motivation is associated with persistence in an activity, however, they state that more research is needed before conclusions can be drawn. The study of elite female netball players in Western Australia provides additional information of the female experience of sport retirement and goes some way

towards correcting the gender imbalance of research to date. Netball is a sport which can provide some of this information due to: (a) its high participation rate; (b) the success of the Australian netball players on the international circuit; and (c) its predominance of female players. The findings from Australian studies will assist in the development of programs which will prepare Australian athletes for retirement from sport in an Australian environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide an Australian and female perspective on sport retirement with a Western Australian cohort of elite netball players taking account of: (a) the factors contributing to the decision to retire; (b) the process of retirement; and (c) post-retirement consequences. The aim of the study is to: (a) add to the existing knowledge of the phenomenon of sport retirement; and (b) to assist in the development of strategies which will help netball players in the transition from elite netball player, through retirement, to their future successfully. The strategies which are recommended will be able to be implemented by players, coaches, and administrators.

Research Questions

The questions which initiated and directed this research are:

1. What factors led the players to retire from elite netball?

2. What was the experience of retirement from sport for the former elite female netball players?

2a. What strategies were of assistance to these athletes when adjusting to their retirement from sport?

2b. What factors hindered their adjustment from elite netball?

3. What were the consequences of sport retirement for these former elite female netball players post retirement?

Limitations

The following delimitations exist in this study:

1. The study only included netball players from within Western Australia. Netball has sufficient Western Australian based former elite players to justify the selection of the sport for this study.

2. The study was specific to the game of netball. By selecting only one sport players experiences of retirement were more comparable, given that they are more likely to have had similar socialisation into the sport, during play and in retirement.

Delimitations

The following factors limit the scope of this study:

1. The participants must have represented either Western Australia and/or Australia in Open competition on more than one occasion or have been in a State Institute program for more than one year.
2. The participant must have chosen to not stand for selection for State, Australian or Institute programs for at least two years.
3. The participants must have resided in Western Australia at the time of the study.
4. Only female netball players were considered.

Definitions

One of the results of increased research activity on this topic is the proliferation of terminology, with terms often having multiple meanings. Therefore a list of terms used in this thesis is provided.

Sport withdrawal.

Sport withdrawal occurs when an athlete ceases participation in a sport, or all sport, whether by choice or because of factors beyond the athletes control. Several types of sport withdrawal exist, retirement, burn out and drop out. While this investigation did not attempt to uncover the factors which separate the types of withdrawal some clarification of what is known of each is made to provide the foundation on which this study was built, and to establish a focus on sport retirement as a transition

away from a sport, for whatever reason the athletes offered for their decision.

Sport retirement.

There is no common definition of sport retirement in the literature. This research used that of Baillie and Danish (1992) as a starting point:

Retirement may occur at any stage in an individual's life and is, in reality, a point of transition from an activity in which there has been a commitment of time and energy and a role identification. (p. 77,

A weakness in the definition is that it defines a point of departure without indicating a destination. It was an appropriate starting point for this investigation as it is based on the construct transition which encapsulated the fundamental elements which are known about sport retirement: (a) that all athletes will retire; (b) that all athletes will undergo some changes in their perspective of themselves and the world; and (c) that this will affect their behaviour and relationships.

Retirement from elite sport occurs when an athlete; (a) voluntarily withdraws from a sport or is forced out of a sport by measures beyond his/her control; and (b) withdraws from the level of the sport which is preferred by the athlete, and in which the athlete is recognised as having achieved a high level of competence by committing a significant amount of personal resources.

Burn out.

Smith (1986, p. 39) viewed burn out as "resulting from an increase in stress-induced costs". Smith commented that:

The most notable feature of burn out is a psychological, emotional, and at times a physical withdrawal from a formerly pursued and enjoyable activity. (p. 37)

Fender (1989) defined burn out in the sport situation as follows:

It is a reaction to the stresses of athletic competition that can be characterized by feelings of emotional exhaustion, an impersonal attitude toward those the athlete associates with, and decreased athletic performance. (p. 64)

Drop out.

Drop out is generally referred to in the sports literature when discussing children who no longer participate, in all sport or a particular sport. It has been suggested that the sport drop out phenomenon may be due to normal trial and error sampling by young people (Lindner, Johns, and Butcher, 1991).

Robertson (1988, p. 5) defined a sport drop out as "one who has discontinued involvement in one particular sport but may still be participating in another sport". Gordon (1989, p. 1) defined a sport drop out as "a participant who discontinues involvement in all organised sport activities". The major difference between Robertson's and Gordon's definitions is that Robertson considered the possibility of changes from one sport to another, while Gordon looked only at those that drop out of all sport involvement.

Comparison of types of sport withdrawal.

Separate bodies of research exist which have explored sport retirement, burn out, and drop out, as types of sport withdrawal. The difference between the three types of sport withdrawal may be found in the explanation for, and responses to, withdrawal. The athlete who retires from elite sport may withdraw voluntarily or involuntarily, and this may result in partial or total withdrawal from the sport. The reasons for withdrawal appear to be individual and complex in nature. These retired athletes may choose to play at a lower level of intensity or transfer their skills into other areas such as coaching and administration. Their withdrawal may be in response to many factors, including burn out. The athletes who become burnt out may voluntarily choose or be involuntarily forced through circumstances such as, an injury or declining performance, to withdraw to a lower level of intensity to cope with the level of stress experienced rather than leave the sport completely or go to another sport. The drop out usually withdraws voluntarily and the cause for this may be sampling (trying different sports) or lack of satisfaction. As a result, these athletes may choose to go to another sport or withdraw from all sport.

The similarities between these experiences may be more closely linked with the responses to the action of withdrawal. Those who choose to withdraw may find the transition more positive than those who are forced to leave and they may partially or totally withdraw from that particular sport or any sport. Those who are forced to

withdraw by issues such as deselection, injury or age are more likely to experience negative reactions and responses to sport withdrawal.

Within the literature presented by the general media on sport retirement there are many ill defined colloquial terms used to describe an athlete's sport withdrawal experience such as 'cut', 'sacked', 'dropped', 'axed'.

Transition.

The definition of transition selected for this study was espoused by Schlossberg (1984) in the counselling domain.

It states that:

P. transition can be said to occur if an event or nonevent results in change in assumption about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships. (p. 5)

This definition was selected because it does not assume positive or negative consequences, nor is it limited to any single sport or type of athlete. The construct of transition and Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition have both gained considerable support in recent sports retirement literature (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Blinde and Greendorfer, 1985; Crook and Robertson, 1991; Curtis and Ennis, 1988; Gorbett, 1985; McPherson, 1984; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b; Pearson and Petitpas, 1990; Rosenberg, 1993; Sinclair and Orlick, 1993; Swain, 1991; Thomas and Ermler, 1988; Werthner and Orlick, 1986, 1987).

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Conceptual Framework

Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition, refer Figure 2, which views any major change in an individual's life as an event which is dealt with as a process of reappraisal by the individual over time was adapted to develop the framework for this study.

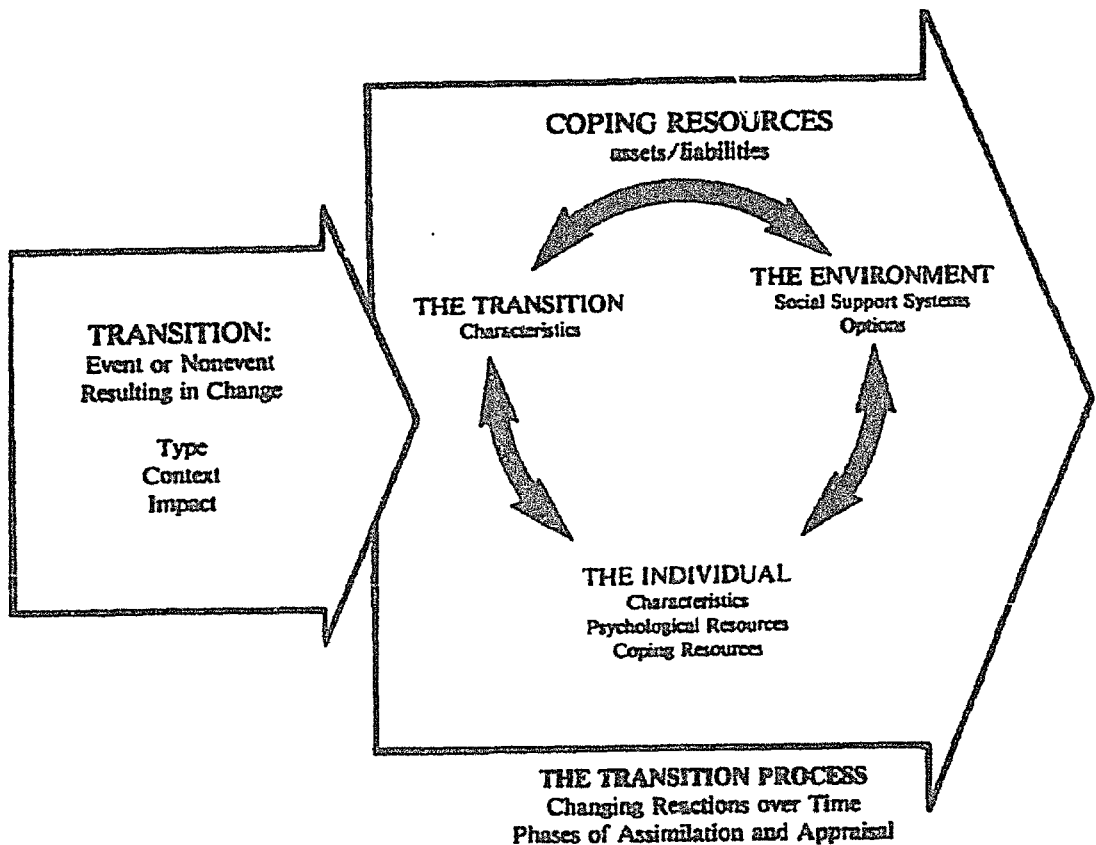


Figure 2. Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition

Note: Taken from Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Theory with Practice, by N.K. Schlossberg, 1984, New York: Springer.

Applying a transitional component allowed attention to be given to three stages of the sport retirement experience: (a) the factors influencing the individual's retirement; (b) the retirement experiences of the individual; and (c) the experience of self and sport post retirement. The framework is presented at Figure 3.

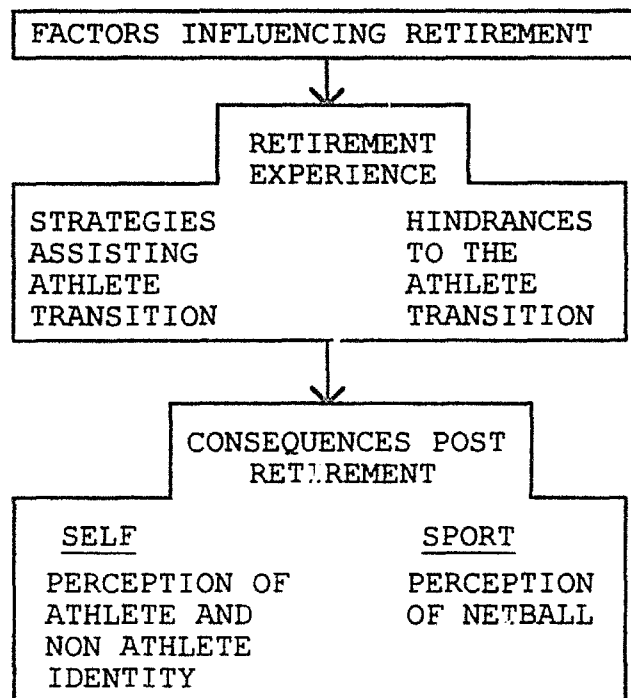


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

The framework did not assume any particular factors are inherent in the experience and allowed each participant's individual experience to be depicted.

The framework is consistent with contemporary research which has yet to identify what constitutes the experience of successful or unsuccessful sport retirement. This study was guided by this framework as the views of former elite female netball players in Western Australia were obtained on their retirement experiences.

Overview of Thesis

The following chapters present the background, methodology and findings of this research into the retirement experiences of former elite female netball players.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on empirical exploration of sport retirement, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. The need for similar research in Australia is discussed. The research issue is a complex one crossing sports, cultures, individual differences in experiences and consequences. As such, specific issues which are relevant to each sport need to be addressed to determine the strategies which will assist future athletes in retirement.

Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework providing an insight to the various theories and models which have been applied to the study of sport retirement.

Chapter 4 provides a description of the qualitative, interpretive approach used in this research to: (a) obtain the data; (b) analyse its contents; (c) interpret meaning; and (d) present the data.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study answering the five research questions followed by a discussion on how these results relate to those found in other research.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and recommendations from the study. This includes an analysis of how these results are relevant to the various theories which have been adapted in the literature to investigate sport retirement experiences. The chapter concludes by making

recommendations for future research and providing some final comments.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Intensive investigation of the phenomenon of retirement is a recent addition to sports research. It tends, therefore, to embrace a wide range of components. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the empirical and theoretical exploration to date on retirement from sport and to provide the background to this study. To achieve this, the chapter includes the following: (a) an explanation of why research in this area is being conducted; (b) the social and physiological factors which have been identified as influencing the response of athletes to retirement from sport; (c) a comparison of retirement from work and retirement from sport; (d) the development of the athlete identity; (e) institutional obligations to the athlete; (f) current prevention and intervention programs and strategies. The chapter concludes by discussing the need for Australian, female and sports specific research.

Research on Sport Retirement

To date there have been very few empirical studies on retirement from sport. The published research has uncovered a wide range of issues which need further investigation. To provide an insight into these a summary of the previous research and their major findings are presented in chronological order and separated into

presented in chronological order and separated into quantitative methods in Appendix A and then qualitative methods in Appendix B.

The factors which can be attributed to successful or unsuccessful retirement have not yet been determined. However, there are many individual factors which have been found to influence an athlete in retirement from sport and these are summarised in the next section.

Factors Influencing Athletic Response to Retirement

Baillie and Danish (1992, p.95) propose that, "the process of adjustment ... is multifaceted, complex and individual". Factors with the potential to influence an athlete's response to sport retirement are summarised in Appendix C to depict the four main categories: (a) those influences controlled by the athlete; (b) those influences which are determined by the sport or other people; (c) the characteristics of the actual retirement experience; and (d) other miscellaneous factors which may have influence on the athlete's response to retirement.

The large number of factors which have been identified may be due to the individual nature of the experience, and that all athletes encounter a period of adjustment. As the study of sport retirement has progressed it has been found to be complex opening many other avenues for exploration. The investigation of similar experiences, such as work retirement, have been made to examine their relevance to sport retirement. The knowledge available on the two phenomena, work and sport retirement, are outlined in the

next section to provide a comparison of the two experiences.

Comparing Work and Sport Retirement

Retirement from work is an avenue which was explored to examine characteristics similar, or dissimilar, to the experience of retirement from sport (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Hill and Lowe, 1974; Gorbett, 1985; McPherson, 1993; Ogilvie and Howe, 1982; Rosenberg, 1981). In comparison with work retirement, sport retirement has unique elements which can produce adjustment difficulties. The most significant of these is the younger age of the athlete when he or she retires from sport compared to the retirement age of the worker. Figure 4 provides a time line comparison of the relationship between elite athletic life and occupational career span which highlights this difference. These time lines, however, are general and are subject to individual fluctuations.

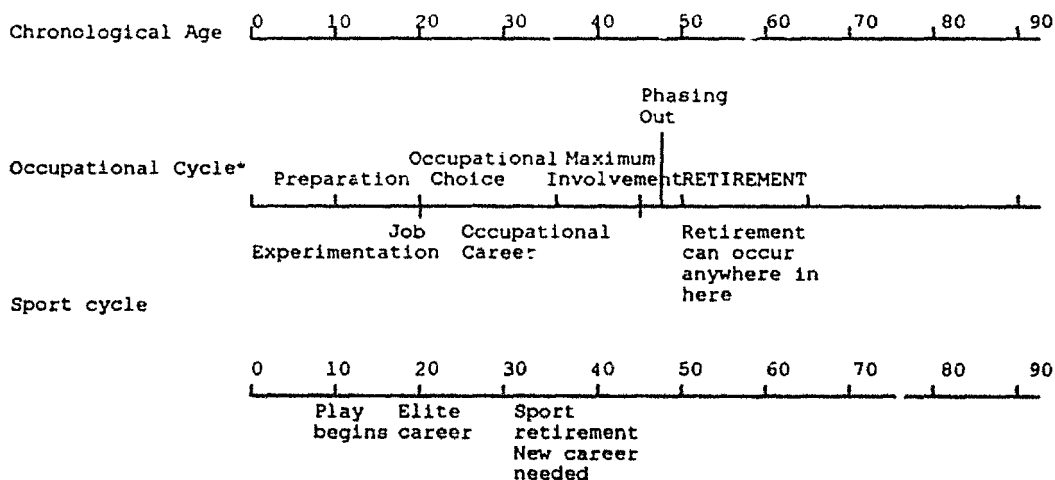


Figure 4. Comparison of sport involvement and work career time lines

Note: * The data in the Occupational cycle are taken from The Sociology of Retirement by R.C. Atchley, 1976, New York: Schenkman.

The early age at which an athlete retires will mean that the athlete needs to: (a) find a role outside sport; (b) be resocialised; (c) learn new skills; and (d) cope with a major life transition in which the athlete has lost a central life involvement.

The similarities and differences between these two experiences are shown in Appendices D and E respectively. The experiences have been placed in categories to outline the different elements of the sport and work environments. The categories are those which: (a) characterise sport and work; (b) cause the retirement; (c) explain what preparation is available within the environments; (d) explain the expectations within those environments; and (e) demonstrate the results of the retirement.

From the 29 items identified in research articles on sport and work retirement, as shown in Appendix D and E, only nine are the same while 20 items are different, respectively. It could be stated, based upon these numbers, that the two types of retirement are significantly different in major areas of their development and therefore should not be identified synonymously when assessing their effects. Rosenberg (1980), however, cautions researchers not to disregard the similarities between the two experiences stating that:

There are arguably unique elements in a sports career, yet these should not be stressed so much that the larger areas of commonality of sport and non-sport careers are overlooked. (p. 21)

It appears that disregard for the findings already available within the work retirement field would be a

mistake, however, assessment of the unique features of sport retirement will assist in clarifying the areas where these experiences overlap and where special consideration of their unique variables needs to be addressed.

Development of the Athlete Identity

Brewer, Van Raalte and Linder (1993, p. 237) define athlete identity as, "The degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role." They perceive athlete identity as a construct of potential importance for both theory and application.

Considerable discussion occurs in the sport literature of the early development of athlete identity which it is suggested can lead to a narrow focus on a sport as the athlete progresses through the various levels of competition (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte & Mahar, 1993; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Swain, 1991; Thomas & Ermler, 1988). It has been found that this sport-only identity often leaves the athlete without skills other than those perfected as an athlete and this may lead to adjustment difficulties when they no longer have the sport role (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). It has also been shown that, because of this narrow focus on sport, athletes are often behind their non-athlete peers in their psychosocial development (Good et al., 1993). Pearson and Petitpas (1990) suggested that:

The normal exploratory behavior may not be compatible with an athletic system that promotes conformity and

requires a continuing commitment of large amounts of physical and psychological energy and attention.

(p. 8)

Thomas and Ermler (1988), when discussing this issue, suggested that the most critical losses for an athlete who leaves sport are those of identity and camaraderie. They stated that:

The recognition, mobility, and entry into special circles, special deals, special treatment are lost. The party is over. The athlete is finally alone with no place to go. (p. 141)

Because of the athlete's exclusive identification with sport they may not plan adequately for their future beyond sport. This is why Thomas and Ermler (1988) suggest that it is important for sport organisations to be aware of their obligations and place services at the athlete's disposal and encourage their use by the athletes so that they will be prepared for the transition out of sport. The responsibility of sport organisations for athlete's development is discussed in the next section.

Institutional Obligations

Baillie (1993, p. 399) stated that, "retirement from active sports competition is an inevitable part of the life span of every athlete." Regrettably, many sports institutions have not acknowledged any responsibility in assisting their athletes to prepare for or adjust to, this phase of their development. The need for sports organisations to take responsibility for the growth and development of the "whole" athlete has been strongly supported in the literature (Blinde and Stratta, 1992; Gorbett, 1985;

McPherson, 1993; Pearson and Petitpas, 1990; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a; Rosenberg, 1981; Sinclair and Orlick, 1993). The average age of elite athletes in today's sport society and the call by sport retirement researchers and others for care of the whole athlete have probably contributed to the pressure on sport organisations to provide facilities and support services to the athlete. However, there is still a great deal of development needed, even in those sport centres which have begun to provide programs, to integrate the needs of the athlete identity with the needs of the identity which exists outside sport.

Thomas and Ermler (1988), in their examination of the institutions' obligations to the athlete during play and in preparation for retirement, suggest that assumptions are made by institutions, which have allowed the belief by the administrators of institutions, athletes and, perhaps, the community in general, that the end justifies the means. The assumptions are: (a) a power relationship exists; (b) a utilitarian (ie. consequentialist) ethic has been the dominant moral basis for action; (c) by virtue of power, an obligation exists that should protect the individual autonomy of the athlete, who is in a dependent position; and (d) in situations in which the principles of informed consent are absent, the legitimate moral outcome of athletics should be the success of the people in the program rather than the success of the program. Thomas and Ermler (1988) concluded that:

To develop in an athlete only athletic excellence is a waste of human resources by a group of professionals who are in the best position to reclaim those

resources. The moral imperative to develop *human* resources through the athletic medium appears clear. Not doing so makes no contribution to the larger society of which athletics are a part and creates a liability rather than an asset when the athlete retires into the nonsport world.

(p. 149)

This statement is probably more true for athletes today than at any other time in history, as society, particularly the sport community, seeks younger heroes and competitors with more spectacular feats of athletic prowess and endurance. The next section will discuss the prevention and intervention strategies incorporated into existing programs.

Prevention and Intervention Programs

Few athletes make sufficient preparation for this major life event and many struggle with their adjustment to retirement (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Lerch, 1981; Ogilvie and Howe, 1982; Werthner and Orlick, 1986). Several research papers on sport retirement refer to the provision of prevention and intervention strategies to assist the athletes prior to and post retirement. (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Gorbett, 1985; Mihovilovic, 1968; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b; Sinclair and Orlick, 1993). Prevention strategies focus on anticipation and avoidance through early preparation of the athlete for alternative careers and interests. Pearson and Petitpas (1990, p.7) use the term *primary prevention*, and describe the concept as "an approach to assisting individuals by preventing problems before they occur". Intervention strategies, on the other hand, focus on assistance, guidance and support services

which seek to minimise any negative effects which may occur as a response to retiring from elite sport. Baillie (1993) reports that:

One of the benefits of the workshops run by these organisations (United States Olympic Committee and the Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre) has been that athletes share their experiences and learn that they are not alone in their difficulties with retirement.
(p. 405)

Werthner and Orlick (1986) have suggested that intervention is most effective when it begins prior to the actual retirement of the athlete. Baillie states that preretirement programs should:

Maintain a holistic, process-orientated, long-term focus, continually viewing the transition within the context of appropriate markers that would occur for other individuals at the athlete's stage of life development. (p. 407)

Post retirement programs should emphasise effective concerns, providing support for the emotional adjustment of the athlete at a time when he or she may be open to receiving such assistance.

In Australia, the Australian Institute of Sport has begun to address their responsibilities for the developing athlete by implementing a program to assist them to prepare for life after sport. The program, Lifeskills for Elite Athletes Program (known as SportsLEAP) was established in 1991, at which time it included state based coordinators in all states except Tasmania and the Northern Territory. The aim of the program is to assist "Australia's sporting elite with employment, career guidance, personal development and education to complement their sporting careers" (Australian

Sports Commission, 1993). The program recognises that athletes who are high achievers in sport often find that their commitment results in them being financially disadvantaged and/or missing necessary life skills. The program addresses these issues with the athletes in the following manner:

it encourages continued education, the development of career skills and provides specially sponsored activities such as training in presentation and public speaking, computer/keyboard skills, financial and time management and so on. (Australian Sports Commission pamphlet, 1993).

It appears, however, after discussion with the Western Australian State Co-ordinator that this program is not provided with sufficient funds (A. Walker, personal communication, 1 November, 1993). Also, it is not being used by the elite female netball players in Australia due to time constraints on the athletes and the coach according to the national coach (J. Brown, personal communication, November 25, 1993).

The literature acknowledged that getting athletes to use prevention and intervention programs such as SportsLEAP may be difficult for several reasons: (a) denial by the athletes of the inevitability of career transition; (b) the athlete's narrow focus on the athletic role; and (c) the pressure from both coaches and administration not to consider matters outside sport (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Crook and Robertson, 1991; Hill and Lowe, 1974; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a, 1993b).

Anderson (1992) in her summary of her research tour of elite athlete education programs around the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia found that:

The future for elite athlete lifeskills programs in Australia is extremely encouraging. However, future developments must ensure that the sole motive for introducing any support program is the athlete and that they are constantly involved in the process.

(p. 6)

Anderson (1992, p.6) also suggested that the Australian programs must be "integrated into the main objectives of an athlete's development" to avoid it being viewed as an "add on" which will be subject to budget uncertainty and so that it is perceived by the athletes as having security, giving them confidence in the continuity of support. This will only be achieved, Anderson believes, by developing "a co-operative program between the National and State Institutes and Australian Olympic Committee".

Australian Studies

Most of the literature available on sport retirement originates from the United States which has a significantly different sport system compared to Australia. The differences between the two systems were discussed in the introduction and presented in Table 1. Ogilvie and Taylor (1993a) discussed the sport system in the United States which has a vast talent pool and a decentralised nature, as follows:

Unlike in other countries, which often have national training centres for elite sport participation, the primary development pools leading to world-class and professional competition in the United States are the collegiate athletic programs and private sports clubs

such as those found in swimming, figure skating and gymnastics. (p. 357)

Siedentop (1990, p. 122) assessed the statistical likelihood of an American becoming a professional athlete. He found that there are just over 2500 professional athletes in the three major American professional sports for men - baseball, basketball and football, which means that one out of every 42,000 males make it to the professional level. The fundamental differences in the nature of the sport systems of the two countries may have a significant impact on the context and timing of athletic retirement in each country.

Research is emerging in Australia, such as Hawkins and Blann's (1993) study of athlete and coach career development and transition. However, more research is necessary (a) to assess the experiences of the Australian athlete to determine the applicability of the general principles of the research findings from other countries to Australian sports and athletes; and (b) to assist in the development of programs which will prepare Australian athletes for retirement from sport in an Australian environment.

Gender and Sport Retirement

A bias in the literature exists toward the investigation of the experiences of male athletes to sport retirement (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993b). To date only a few studies have attempted to provide a balanced gender distribution (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993;

Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Research by Allison and Meyer (1988) is the only published study which exclusively deals with female athletes retirement experiences. They found that former elite female tennis professionals did not find the experience traumatic, instead they saw it as an opportunity to re-establish more traditional roles and lifestyles. Although there has been some criticism of these findings, as it is suggested that they pay little attention to other numerically significant outcomes (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993b), the results do suggest that further research needs to be performed to provide more evidence of the female athletes' experience of, and response to, retirement from sport.

Sport Specific Research

Several researchers have called for studies to be conducted in different sports to determine the sport specific variables which may exist and to confirm or deny generality of athletic experience. For example, tennis (Allison and Meyer, 1988); junior hockey (Curtis and Ennis, 1988); and baseball (Lerch, 1981).

Netball has not received attention in regard to sport retirement as yet. It has all the components required at an International level in terms of competition to make it a suitable forum for investigation of elite sport issues.

Conclusion

There are many unresolved issues concerning sport retirement, some of which have been addressed by the

present study. Oglivie and Taylor (1993b, p. 772) suggested that the exposure of traumatic response to retirement to the general population may have a positive influence on other individuals with similar difficulties and therefore view sport retirement as "an important issue worthy of study". By collecting and analysing information obtained about the retirement from sport experiences of former elite female Netball players from Western Australia this study provides a contribution to extend the knowledge of the phenomenon of sport retirement.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical Framework

Psychological and sociological theories have been adapted by researchers in an attempt to explain sport retirement. Two study areas which have been prominently used are those of thanatology (the study of death and dying) and gerontology (the study of aging). Both are outlined below.

Thanatological Theory

Rosenberg (1993) suggested that Ball's (1976) study of failure in sport, which used qualitative materials from professional baseball and football, laid the foundation for the use of thanatological theory in the study of sport sociology. Ball found that:

Teams are structured around their game-generated positions and are essentially closed systems. There is no place for failures to go but out of that system. Just as death removes players in "the game of life" from their positions, so too, does failure remove professional athletes from "the life of the game". Vacating that life, they become "dead" albeit through recall and the like, with some chance for resurrection. (p.732)

The term "social death" comes from the field of thanatology and was introduced as an awareness of the different modes of conceptualising death developed. It refers to the social isolation and ostracism from another group or individual (Rosenberg, 1993 p. 602). Subsequent

empirical and theoretical studies tended to emphasise the negative consequences of retirement from sport. For example, McPherson (1993) emphasised the presence of "psychologically crippled jocks" who lack education and had few financial or emotional support resources.

Coakley (1983) challenged the notion of social death and inherent negative consequences and suggested that for some athletes sport retirement was "rebirth". He prompted a change of cognisance by researchers and the avenues of research broadened. Since then only one study (Blinde and Stratta, 1992) has considered a thanatological approach and this arose from the athletes' responses to interviews. The study investigated 20 athletes who had either been cut from their sport team or whose entire sport program was suddenly eliminated. All drew the death analogy as their response to the experience of involuntary and unanticipated exit from sport. Their study supported the belief of researchers that while negative consequences are not common to all athlete's experience, thanatological theory may have relevance in some cases (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Crook and Robertson, 1991; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b; Swain, 1991).

Gerontological Theory

Mihovilovic (1968), administered a questionnaire to 44 retired male Yugoslavian soccer players, and found that sport retirement had links to gerontology. He viewed sport retirement as an atypical phenomenon, where people who were

still in good health and fully efficient in life retired from a specific life style. Since then many of the sub-theories from this field have been adapted to explain sport retirement. The essence of Rosenberg's (1981) summary of these sub-theories is presented below.

Disengagement theory.

This theory was proposed by Cumming and Henry (1961) and suggested that society and the aging individual mutually withdraw from one another for the benefit and satisfaction of both. Within the sport domain, for example, it is proposed that an older athlete will withdraw to allow younger players to take their place. This theory has been criticised by many researchers as lacking convincing empirical substantiation (Lerch, 1981; McPherson, 1993; Oglivie and Taylor, 1993b; and Rosenberg, 1981).

Continuity theory or consolidation theory.

Proposed by Atchley (1976) this theory suggested that substitution is not necessary for lost roles. If the individual has sufficient and varied roles, the time and energy previously devoted to the lost role can be redistributed among the many remaining roles. For example, the retired athlete will redistribute the time and energy previously given to sport to other roles, such as family. Critics suggest that many of the other role options open to the retiring athlete are not seen as having value and are, therefore, unable to fulfil the lost sport role (Rosenberg, 1981). Rosenberg, does, however, suggest two areas in

which this theory is applicable and they are by helping the athletes acknowledge the improbability of continuity and by providing an understanding of why athletes prefer to remain in the game at a lower level or in another capacity, such as coach or administrator, even after performance declines.

Activity theory.

This theory was constructed by Friedman and Havighurst (1954) and maintained that lost roles are to be substituted by new ones of roughly comparable meaning to the individual and that one's total activity level should decline little if at all. Finding a valued alternative may prove difficult for the athlete. For example, working outside sport may require former athletes to be employed in an environment not of their choosing, such as, an office position, which requires them to be inside and sitting at a desk. The major criticism of this theory is that it suggests that as people age they are often less active but nonetheless happy and well adjusted to retirement. This is not generally the case for an athlete who is often young and still needs to be active.

Subcultural theory.

Proposed by Rose (1965), this theory builds upon activity theory adding the possibility of subcultural norms which are different from those of the encompassing society. This is of value in explaining the existence of mechanisms in sport which deny or obscure retirement. For example, the time commitment required of the athlete by many sports, for

them to achieve selection in representative teams may not allow the athletes to commit the necessary time to other activities, including education, to ensure that they have a valued alternative occupation when they retire from sport.

Social breakdown theory.

Adapted to aging by Kuypers and Bengston (1973) this theory proposed that, with role loss, one becomes increasingly susceptible to external labelling. If the prevailing social evaluation of one's status is unfavourable, one withdraws and reduces or eliminates certain activities. For example, this may occur when an athlete retires. If their new status as nonathlete is unfavourable and they are no longer accepted within the sport environment then they may withdraw from the work and sport environments. Lerch (1981) suggested that this theory explained the vicious spiral of role redefinition, atrophy of skill and lowered self image of the retiring athlete.

Exchange theory.

This was applied to adjustment to aging by Dowd (cited by Rosenberg, 1981), when attempting to show that successful aging requires both awareness and realignment of one's diminishing power resources. This is most evident when an athlete remains in the sport too long. The athlete's performance begins to decline as they age, they are no longer a valued player, and management does not select them for a team or does not renew their contract. This theory is considered useful as a possible device to forewarn

athletes of the shift of power from them to sport management as the inevitable aging overcomes their performance in sport.

Since 1985, only two studies have applied gerontological theory. Curtis and Ennis (1988) in their study surveyed and compared measures of life satisfaction, employment status, and marital status, between Canadian Junior hockey players and a representative sample of males of the same age from the general population. Koukouris (1991) studied 113 former Greek athletes who completed a 38 point questionnaire on sport retirement. The results of both studies did not support negative consequences due to retirement from sport. However, the results did suggest that continued involvement in sport at a recreational level or in a role other than playing limited attitudes of negativity developing.

Crook and Robertson (1991) criticised the use of gerontological theory stating that:

Gerontological theories cannot adequately account for the complex nature of athletic retirement, an alternative perspective is needed which (a) accounts for the many factors that influence an individual's response to retirement and (b) explains both positive and negative experiences.

(p. 122)

Conceptual Models

Three conceptual models have provided alternative ways of investigating sport retirement. They are: (a) Sussman's

(1972) Analytical Model for the Sociological Analysis of Retirement; (b) Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model; and (c) Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition, each of which is summarised below.

Analytical model for the sociological analysis of retirement (Sussman, 1972).

This model (refer Appendix F) was intended to further the understanding of aged retirement by associating components of situational and structural variables, perception of situation, and individual variables to linking systems and boundary constraints on the retiree. The model was adapted by Hill and Lowe (1974) to demonstrate its relevance to the study of retirement from sport and is presented in that form in Figure 5.

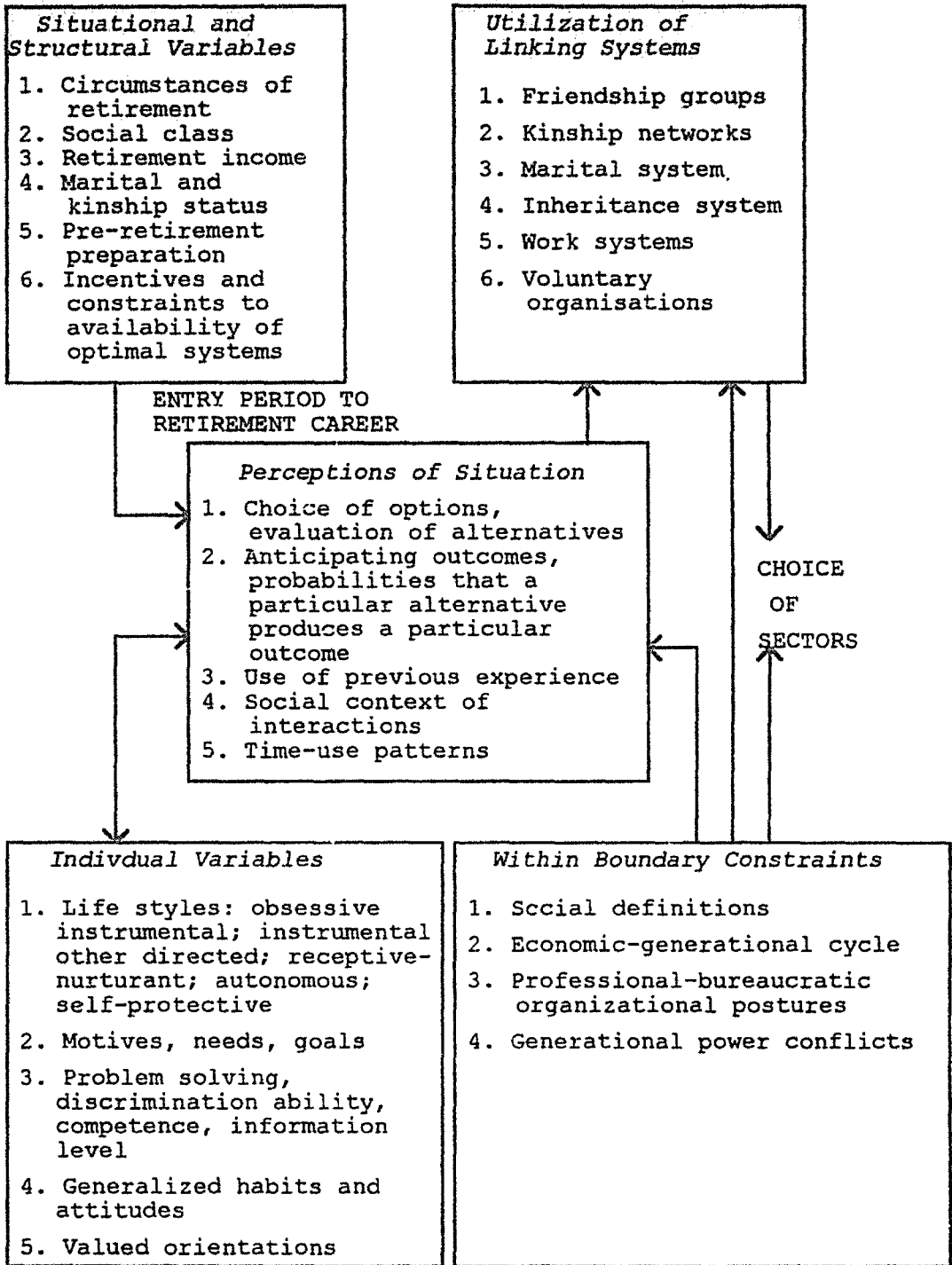


Figure 5. Sussman's (1971) Analytic Model for the Sociological Analysis of Retirement, Adapted by Hill and Lowe (1974).

Note : From The Inevitable Metathesis of the Retiring Athlete by P.Hill and B.Lowe, 1974, International Review of Sport

Hill and Lowe (1974, p. 28) found the model to be appropriate in the "atypical instance of retirement from sport" in which they consider "the retired athlete, like his older counterpart, faces a crisis brought about by the damage inflicted upon his personal and social identity by retirement". Coakley (1983) and Rosenberg (1981) saw the model as a potential starting point for investigation of sport retirement. Baillie and Danish (1992), however, suggest that it has limited use:

The model can be applied to the career transition of an athlete but serves only to describe the factors, without making any prediction for ease of transition of developmental outcomes.

(p. 88)

Investment model (Rusbult, 1980).

This model described commitment to a relationship or to an activity as a product of satisfaction, alternatives, and investments and has been effective in predicting commitment to work settings (Farrell & Rusbult, 1983). Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons and Keeler (1993) adapted this model proposing that sport commitment is determined by sport enjoyment, involvement alternatives, social constraints and involvement opportunities. Of these, they found sport enjoyment and personal investments to be the dominant predictors of commitment. The adapted model may provide understanding of the development of the athlete and the reasons for adjustment difficulties as the model is developed and tested by further research.

Model of the individual in transition (Schlossberg, 1984).

From the earliest literature on athletic retirement researchers have used the term transition in their description of sport retirement (Andrews, 1981; Hill and Lowe, 1974; Lerch, 1981; Mihovilovic, 1968; McPherson, 1978, 1993; Reynolds, 1981; Rosenberg, 1981), yet it had not been identified as a framework for study. Investigation into the construct transition did not occur, until after Coakley's (1983, p.3) article which suggested that "studies viewed through a conceptual framework that focuses attention on role transition could be useful". Since then, the construct transition has gained considerable support (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Blinde and Greendorfer, 1985; Crook and Robertson, 1991; Curtis and Ennis, 1988; Gorbett, 1985; McPherson, 1984; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b; Pearson and Petitpas, 1990; Rosenberg, 1993; Sinclair and Orlick, 1993; Thomas and Ermler, 1988; Werthner and Orlick, 1986, 1987). In particular, Schlossberg's (1984) model has gained support (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Pearson and Petitpas, 1990; Swain, 1991). Crook and Robertson (1991) stated that:

Schlossberg's model may provide the flexible, multidimensional approach which is currently needed to adequately study athletic retirement.
(p. 123)

In Schlossberg's (1984) framework transitions are viewed as:

A process of continuing and changing reactions over-time for better or worse - which are linked to the individual's continuous and changing appraisal of self-in-situation.

(p. 56)

In the model, shown in Figure 2, there are three major factors which are identified as influencing the individual in the transition process: (a) the variables characterising the particular transition; (b) the individual; and (c) the environment in which the transition occurs. The support for the theoretical relevance of Schlossberg's (1984) model to the study of sport retirement suggests it is worthy of further investigation.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

This chapter outlines the: (a) design; (b) method of obtaining the participant sample; (c) ethical considerations; (d) data collection; (e) analysis procedures; and (f) methods used to present the data in the proceeding chapter.

Design

The focus of this investigation was to gain knowledge and understanding of the individual's experience of retirement from elite netball. To obtain the perspective of individuals a qualitative, interpretive approach was employed. Patton (1990, p. 22) stated that, "Qualitative data is rich. It provides depth, detail, and allows people to be understood in their own terms and in their own natural settings." The importance of gaining individual data in the study of sport retirement which is considered to be a transition is explained by Schlossberg (1984, p. 56), "the only way we can assess where an individual is, in the transition process, is through the individual's own perceptions and appraisals." The strength of an interpretive approach was given by Candy (1989) who wrote:

Interpretive accounts do not seek to reinterpret the actions and experiences of the actors, but rather to give a deeper, more extensive and more systematic representation of events from the view point of the actors involved. (p. 5)

Sample

A sample of 15 participants was selected using the following criteria:

1) They must be female

2) They must have represented either Western Australia and/or Australia on more than one occasion in Open Netball competition or have been a member of a State Institute of Sport program for at least two years.

3) They must have chosen not to stand again for selection in State, Australian and Institute of Sport programs for at least two years. However, this may have been due to voluntary or involuntary retirement.

4) They must have resided in Western Australia or been available during the data collection stage for interview in Western Australia.

5) After details of the first group of respondents were received it was evident that there was little representation of those retiring during the last decade. Considering the changes which have occurred during that period it was appropriate to redress this imbalance. An additional criterion was established which required participants to have retired from elite netball within the last 10 years.

Discussions with the WA Netball Association (WANA) determined that each year, since 1939, a State team of 10 players has represented Western Australia in the Australian Championships. Given that many players represent the State more than once there was a potential pool of over 500 players available to participate in this study.

The participants were solicited through WANA by two means, mail addresses and telephone numbers. The first approach was by mail with the assistance of WANA to 49 possible participants. The letter of disclosure explained the purpose and aim of the study and requested their participation. A copy of the letter and information sent is at Appendix G for reference. This first approach provided 10 respondents of whom nine participated in this study. The second approach was made to a further seven participants by telephone from numbers supplied by WANA. The second approach required, in addition to meeting the base criteria, for players to be drawn from those who had retired within the last ten years. Additional participants were offered by WANA, seven were contacted and six of these met the criteria for inclusion and agreed to participate. A total of 15 participants' experiences of sport retirement were obtained as a result of this study. This gave a balance of eras enabling the study to address historical changes in the structure of netball.

The criterion which required a lapse of time of at least two years between retirement and interview allowed the participants time to gain a better understanding of their responses to retirement and provide some insights into their assimilation processes.

Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed by letter and verbally of the purpose, procedures and length of the study prior to their participation. They were also advised that a

counselling service had been arranged for the use of any participant who became emotionally distressed as a consequence of discussing their retirement from netball and the charges related to the use of the service would be recoverable through the medicare system. This service was arranged by the researcher through the Senior Welfare Counsellor at Edith Cowan University.

As outlined in the letter provided to each participant in the study, the data collected have remained confidential. When reporting the findings of this study in chapter 4 the confidentiality of the participants is maintained through the use of pseudonyms. The participants have been given a pseudonym which relates to their generation. This was achieved by reviewing microfilm of The West Australian newspapers birth columns from 1930 until 1980 to obtain names which were frequently used during the period when the participants in this study were born. Pseudonyms are also used when there is mention of another significant person in their life or netball career, or if they talk about a place they visited which may identify them to others.

Data Collection

A pilot study was undertaken which consisted of one interview with two former elite female netball players. This provided a forum for the development of the interview guide for the present study and for the refinement of interview techniques. From the results of the pilot the present study was developed.

In the present study, after receiving the completed informed consent forms through the mail from the first group an interview time and location of the participant's choosing was determined. The second group were contacted by phone and the first interview was arranged. Before beginning the first interview with the second group they were given a letter of disclosure and a consent form which were completed and returned. The interviews with both groups were conducted over a 14 week period from May until August, 1994.

The first interview took approximately 30 minutes focusing on demographic data and obtaining a netball career profile of each player to allow later comparison. There data were recorded manually. This interview proved to be of great value in establishing rapport with the participants, especially in the initial stages of interviewing participants when the researcher was still becoming familiar with the process.

The second interview, took between 60 and 90 minutes and was based on 10 standard open-ended questions which allowed the participant to raise issues they considered relevant to them. This flexibility was based on Patton's (1990) statement that:

The truly open-ended question does not presuppose which dimension of feeling or thought will be salient for the interviewee. The truly open-ended question allows the person being interviewed to select from among that person's full repertoire of possible responses. Indeed, in qualitative inquiry one of the things the evaluator is trying to determine is what dimensions, themes, and image/words people use among themselves to describe their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. (p. 296)

The interview guide used for Interview 2 was structured on the basis of the research questions and developed to ascertain the whole experience of sport retirement by obtaining information related to the point at which the athletes had reasons to retire until the time of their interview. A copy of the interview guide is at Appendix H.

The third interview, took approximately 30 minutes and gave the interviewer and the participant the opportunity to discuss any outstanding matters. It also allowed the interviewee to add any further issues which they felt were relevant but had not been covered during the previous interviews. Most of the questions in this interview were in response to the data collected in Interview 2 or in response to the participant's additional comments. The final question, "Would you please describe yourself?", however, was a new question asked of each participant to gain an understanding of how they perceived themselves post retirement.

Initially there were three stages to the interview process. After interviewing nine participants in this manner the number of interviews was reduced to two ie. data collection for Interview Schedules 1 and 2 were then taken at the first meeting with the participant and data collected for Interview 3 came from the second meeting. This change was made due to the developing skill of the researcher and evolution of data collection techniques. The change in procedure did not produce any observable effects. Collecting the data in more than one session

enhanced both rapport and recall by the former elite netball players.

The time between the final two interviews was used by the researcher to replay and/or transcribe the audiotapes. This alerted the investigator to any detail still to be covered and allowed further probing into important issues raised. The multiple interview approach also provided the opportunity to confirm the details collected in the previous session. This was achieved by direct reference to the transcripts or written notes. It assisted in developing rapport between the investigator and the participant and allowed discussion on each issue raised to be of sufficient depth to gain valuable data.

With the consent of the participants, the second and third interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed in full to improve reliability and validity of the data obtained. The audiotapes and transcripts are stored in a locked cabinet and will remain so for a period of five years, after which the tapes will be erased. The transcripts will be kept for future research.

Data Analysis

The study employed inductive analysis which lets the athlete's experience be understood in their own terms. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that:

Inductive analysis begins not with theories or hypothesis but with the data themselves, from which theoretical categories and relational propositions may be arrived at by inductive reasoning processes.

(p. 333)

Before commencing the analysis, each transcript was read to regain familiarity. After obtaining a further sense of the data the decision was made to begin the analysis using two methods: (a) case analysis, that is, a case study for each participant interviewed was written; and (b) cross-case analysis which grouped together answers from the different participants to each question. Both types of analysis were perceived to make contributions to this investigation and provided a framework within which the data could be managed. In this process the data were written down in the participant's own terms and when the analysis of each was complete some initial category terms were attached to the data, such as, support, goal attainment, and significant others. These labels were then used to establish a data index. For example, the topic support, was abbreviated to S, while significant others became SO. This was the first step recommended by Patton (1990) in content analysis. Patton (1990, p. 382) asserts that: "Simplifying the complexity of reality into some manageable classification scheme is the first step of analysis".

The data were then placed into categories using two concepts which Guba (1978) termed, indigenous concepts and sensitising concepts. Patton (1990) explained these as follows:

First, the analyst can use the categories developed and articulated by the people studied to organise presentation of particular themes [indigenous concepts]. Second, the analyst may also become aware

of categories or patterns for which the people studied did not have labels or terms, and the analyst develops terms to describe these inductively generated categories [sensitizing concepts]. (p. 390)

Examples of indigenous concepts which emerged directly from the data in this study are: education, loyalty, pregnancy. Sensitising concepts were generated by analysing the data for categories which either did not have a term attached to them or the term did not clearly identify meaning. An example of this is the discussion by the participants of goals which had not been attained, unresolved issues such as not playing for Australia or when participants reminisced on what might have been had they not retired at the time they did. The term given to this was *residual business*. An example of this type of analysis of a transcript is at Appendix I.

To focus the analysis a return to the literature was made as Patton (1990) advised that this can contribute positively to scholarly, qualitative research. Patton stated that:

For scholarly qualitative research, it is typical to use the published literature to help bring focus to a particular study ... the literature will likely have contributed to the initial design of the study (implicitly or explicitly), so it is appropriate to revisit that literature to help refocus the analysis.
(p. 375)

The next process was to deal with what Guba (1978) called convergence and divergence issues. Patton (1990) describes convergence as "figuring out what things fit together" and divergence as how to "flesh out" the patterns

or categories. Patton (1990) outlined Guba's methods as follows:

He [Guba] suggests this is done by processes of extension (building on items of information already known), bridging (making connections among different items), and surfacing (proposing new information that ought to fit and then verifying its existence).

(p. 404)

An example of the employment of this process is in the development of the category, *significant others*. The category was initially very broad and incorporated many diverse issues both from significant others within netball and external to the Netball environment. After completing the outlined processes the broad category of *significant others* needed to be separated into two sub-categories for "goodness of fit". They were: (a) support of significant others; and (b) influence of significant others. When this phase of the analysis was complete, that is when sources of information were exhausted and saturation was achieved in the categories, the analysis stopped and interpretation began.

The final two stages of the analysis were to interpret the data and synthesise the information with other qualitative research. Patton (1990) defined interpretation as:

Going beyond the descriptive data. Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation. (p. 423)

Patton (1990) suggested that for scholarly inquiry, the qualitative synthesis is "a way to build theory through induction and interpretation".

Presentation of findings

The next chapter outlines the results of these processes and is divided into sections which enable each research question to be answered. To focus the analysis and to assemble the information in a compact form, the findings of the analysis are often presented in display format. Miles and Huberman (1984) stated that:

Valid analysis requires, and is driven by, displays that are as simultaneous as possible, are focused, and are as systematically arranged as the questions at hand demand. While such displays may sometimes be overloading, they will never be monotonous. Most important, the chances of drawing and verifying valid conclusions are very much greater than for narrative text. (p. 79)

CHAPTER 5

Research Findings and Discussion

This chapter outlines the findings of this research, providing background information on the players netball careers and the results obtained for each of the five research questions. As the results are described they are integrated with the findings of other research to allow immediate comparison.

Netball Career Profiles

This section is arranged to provide basic data on the players as a group and as individuals. This is achieved by providing career summaries of the group including: (a) netball career summary; (b) the player's motivation for playing; (c) injuries which prohibited them from playing netball; and (d) historical changes which affected their netball careers. When appropriate, individual data are included, generally in table form, to condense the information into a manageable form. The netball career summaries were gathered during Interview 1 and constitute the basis for the player's inclusion in this study. The data also provide the background to the interviewees development as a netball player and their participation in elite competition.

Netball Career Summary

The age of the players at the time of interview ranged from 23 to 66 years. This spread allowed valuable data to be

obtained over several generations. The data also provided an overview of how the experience had been dealt with by the players over time as some had retired from elite netball as recently as three years ago while others had retired more than forty years ago. The players' elite participation occurred over five decades, from the 1950s - 1990s. A fairly even balance of these five eras was obtained with three elite players in the 1950s, four in the 1960s, five in the 1970s and three in the 1980-90s era.

Before discussing the players as a whole group it is appropriate to provide a review of each individual athlete's career in the sport. To achieve this efficiently, at the end of this section the information has been presented in Table 2 and includes: (a) the age they were introduced into the sport; (b) the number of times they were selected in representative teams (known as "reps") at each elite level of netball; (c) the time they spent in Australian Institute of Sport/Western Australian Institute of Sport (AIS/WAIS) based programs; and (d) the age at which they retired from elite netball.

The players were introduced to netball between the ages of eight and 11 years, at primary school or as a consequence of a family member or friend playing. Most played the sport for their school and 11 were later named in State and/or Australian Junior Teams, seven on several occasions.

The players have a total of 230 years of playing experience between them with each individual having between nine and 23 years experience. These figures were obtained by adding the years from the age they began until the year

they retired from elite netball. The amount of experience they have, and the elite level at which they played in their careers, make them valuable participants when studying the experiences of elite female athletes retirement from elite sport.

The age of retirement from elite netball of these participants ranged from 16 to 32 years. For those who played at elite level in the 1970s the retirement age was greater than in previous years, this may coincide with the success during those years by Western Australia. Overall the majority found the timing of their retirement was appropriate for their generation of play. A few, however, experienced premature retirement and these will be discussed in the section concerning the factors influencing the players to retire.

Two players had to change clubs due to their family moving to another location. The majority of the players remained with their original club throughout their playing history, some due to the geographic restrictions imposed by the sport, others by choice. The benefit of this restriction has been loyalty. It has also caused some problems for players as they have made the transition away from elite netball and these will be discussed in the section regarding the player's perception of themselves and netball post retirement.

Most players continued to be members of the State Open team once selected until they retired. The exceptions were two players who had children between selections and three players who were deselected in between representations.

This experience tended to make the players more determined to regain selection the next year. It did not seem to have made any substantial difference to the retirement experience. At all levels of play the players experienced different coaches and, while representing more than one side, were required to adapt their games to different coaching styles and standards.

Table 2
Individual Netball Career Profiles of the Players

Name of Player	Under Age Reprs.	WAIS AIS	State Reprs.	Aust. Squad	Aust. Reprs.	Total Reprs.	Age Playing Began (years)	Age Retired (years)
Gladys	0	0	2	0	0	2	10	26
Alice	2	0	3	0	0	5	11	20
Joan	1	0	3	0	0	4	11	23
Maureen	1	0	3	1	2	6	12	22
Rosemary	2	0	2	0	0	4	9	16
Beverley	0	0	6	0	0	6	10	20
Lorraine	1	0	8	0	1	10	10	23
Stephanie	1	0	13	0	10	24	8	29
Jennifer	3	2	8	2	0	11	9	31
Julie	0	0	8	1	6	14	8	24
Jeanette	2	0	9	1	3	14	10	29
Trudy	3	0	6	1	0	9	10	29
Carolyn	0	0	15	2	1	16	9	32
Katherine	3	1	8	2	0	11	8	28
Nicole	5	5	6	0	0	11	8	21
Total	24	8	95	9	23	142		

Motivation for playing

Advice given by the players during the interview found that the majority of players began netball at primary school as it was one of the few girl's team games available or taught. Later the players stated that their motivation to stay was based on: (a) skill improvement; (b) reward

through team selection; (c) enjoyment of play; and (d) friendships made through participation.

Many competed simultaneously in other sports, such as basketball and athletics, especially during their junior years, at State level. Later, in their middle teenage years, when time commitments of school, sport and other activities increased and the sports began competing for their time and skills, most chose to continue only with Netball at an elite level. Two players continued another sport at State Open level for many years. The choice to concentrate on netball was made due to: (a) higher perceived competence; (b) their belief that prestige within Netball was higher compared to the other sport at the time; and (c) the enjoyment and friendships made in the sport.

The sport participation of some players was restricted to netball at an early age by choice or external control. For example, external control was exercised by physical education teachers who wanted them to concentrate on playing netball so that they could represent the School. Other players were restricted to netball as their parents were not in a financial position to afford more than one sport for their children.

The interview revealed that the most significant influences on the players during their netball career were: (a) parents; (b) coaches; (c) friends; (d) role models such as All Australian players or other family members who had been successful at netball; and (e) later their husbands who encouraged and supported their passion for the sport.

Injuries

There is considerable speculation both by the netball community and researchers regarding injuries in netball. Much of the literature on netball is written in response to criticism that netball has a high injury rate (Hopper, 1986; Hopper and Elliott, 1993; Otago, 1993; Steele, 1986,1987). While some articles deny that netball has a high injury rate (Otago, 1993) others acknowledge that when serious injuries occur in netball they are most commonly related to the knee and the ankle. Hopper, (1986) found that these injuries amount to 20% and 40% respectively of the serious injuries in netball.

Seven of the players in this study had major injuries which stopped them playing netball. For one player, Rosemary, this would be the catalyst for her career to end, for the others the injuries were severe enough to stop them playing for a considerable time. These are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3
Injuries Sustained During Netball Career

Name of Player	Site of Injury
Maureen	Achilles Tendon
Joan	Knee (cruciate ligament)
Lorraine	Knee, ankle*
Stephanie	Knee (ligaments), ankle*
Jennifer	Achilles tendon, ankle*
Carolyn	Knee (reconstruction)**
Nicole	Ankle, broken finger, broken nose
Rosemary	Shoulder**

Note: * refers to multiple minor injuries

** refers to an injury which occurred outside
Netball

Three players whose elite play was during the early 1950s reported no injuries and one stated that this was because her play was confined to grass surfaces. Playing surfaces other than grass were introduced into Western Australia in 1961 at what is now known as Perth Netball Centre where eight hard courts (bitumen) were established as well as the grass courts (Massey, personal communication 31 October, 1994). Many synthetic surfaces have been established since then, as the costs of maintaining grass courts to the standards required has become too expensive. Currently it is proposed to remove 50 grass courts at Perth Netball Centre. They will be replaced by synthetic surfaces.

Two players discussed long term injuries as a result of playing netball. Maureen now has a back problem which restricts her from physical activity and Carolyn is aware

of the fragile nature of her knees and ankle joints. Hopper and Elliott (1993) found in their study of elite netball players that:

More than a quarter of the players had overuse type injuries (24% retropatella pain, 38% shin soreness) and 33% complained of back problems during their careers. (p. 155)

Although the current research does not solely focus on injuries as did Hopper and Elliott, the occurrence of injuries both minor and major appear to be similar in this study.

Historical Changes Which Affected Netball Participation

During data analysis it became increasingly apparent that the players dealt with retirement from sport and simultaneously had to cope with many historical changes including: (a) changes in expected length of their playing career; (b) changes in financial costs associated with netball; (c) an increase in under age events; and (d) changes to the geographical structure of netball.

Expected Length of Netball Career

Netball careers in the 1940s and 50s were expected to end at age 24 to 25 years due to the expectation by society (including the players) that they would marry around 21 to 22 years of age. The expectation on retirement age appears to have cycled somewhat from younger to older depending on other historical events and mores. At present it is usual for younger players of 19 years of age to be selected into teams and once in they may continue until 30 to 32 years of age. However, this is quite variable, with 21 years of age

also being considered an acceptable age to leave netball today. It is also now more acceptable in society for the women to "come back" after they have had children. This coming back is accepted at any level although it appears that most will not return to elite level competition.

Financial Restrictions

Financial restrictions in the 1950s and 60s when socio-economic divisions may have been more seriously felt by families, often saw netball chosen as a sport due to the limited costs associated with playing.

Under Age Competition

During the netball careers of some of the players, under-age competitions were non-existent or limited. If a player had not made State Open by 18 years of age it was not considered likely that she would ever achieve that level. More recently the number of under-age competitions has dramatically increased, as previously depicted in the netball structure outlined in Figure 1 (p. 6). The result of this increase in under-age events is that many young players: (a) now represent the State in more than one under-age team; (b) attend the Western Australian Institute of Sport; and (c) may also represent the Open State side, which could lead them to Australian squad or team selection. The amount of training and commitment required of these players is often too much for them. Nicole, who retired from a similar situation, said:

Probably because I've been through it myself. There are a few girls now [in whom] I can see me all over. They've got to realise there are years to come for all that, but, because WA is stuck for players some people

have to play 2 or 3 years in a State side. They are just going to get burnt out like I did. I know they won't, but they just need to spread themselves out over the years.

The current lack of skilled players appears to give netball two choices. One possibility is to introduce a rule which only allows a player to represent one under age side a year, thereby reducing the load on any one young player and increasing the number of players who have access to State representation. This choice does mean that some teams may be quite weak when the change is first made; however, as the young players develop, they will improve with higher competition. The other choice is to continue with multiple entry into the under age competition and risk the players becoming burned out and not remaining to play in State Open level. Considering that Western Australia is not performing well at present in Australian competition, (the side finished in sixth place at the National Championships in 1994), this may be a good time to change the rules to increase Junior State participation opportunities.

Sport Alternatives

The players reported that in the 1950s to 1970s sport alternatives, particularly for women, were more limited and it was a status symbol to be in a State Team. Netball, in particular, had prestige. It had a much higher profile than other female sports due to the funding support it received and the high ranking of Western Australia at the National Championships.

Changes to Netball Structure

In 1994 a change in the constitution was implemented to reduce the structure of Western Australian netball from 80 represented associations to 11 regions. This decentralisation has given the players a more positive perception of the fairness of elite netball team selection. As Carolyn put it:

It used to be for a long time you had to play at Perth Netball Association to have any chance to get in the State team, now it's opened the road to a lot more people.

Not all these historical changes have been positive for elite netball players. The elite player is now expected to: (a) train all year round and for a longer time each week; (b) play for as many teams as possible; (c) continue play for longer; and (d) be involved after they have had children, to assist the sport. This situation is making it increasingly difficult for elite netball players, especially those in Western Australia, where the number of elite players available is smaller.

This section has provided the background on the players who participated in this study. The next section will outline the factors which have influenced the players to retire from elite level netball.

Factors Leading To Retirement From Elite Netball

To answer research question one about the factors leading to retirement from elite netball generally it was found that it was not a single factor which led the players in

this study to retire but, rather, a number of factors combined to influence the decision to retire. The experience was found to be individual in nature, yet, it also had common elements. Comparative analysis of the data has shown that two distinct groups can be identified: (a) involuntary retirees, for whom external circumstances influenced the decision; and (b) voluntary retirees, who had internal control of the retirement decision.

Involuntary Retirement

Seven of the participants in this study experienced involuntary retirement from elite Netball due to external circumstances. Table 4 outlines the decision process of the players who experienced involuntary retirement.

Of the seven involuntary retirements, four were due to deselection, two were a result of changes in the nature of their employment and one was due to an injury, which was sustained outside netball, followed by other factors which further restricted the players involvement. External control is viewed as one of the conditions leading to sport retirement which will often cause negative reactions from the athlete (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b; Reynolds, 1981).

The following discussion is divided into three sections which provide a more detailed explanation of the factors which influenced the player's involuntary retirements, the sections are: (a) retirement due to deselection; (b) retirement due to employment obligations and opportunities; and (c) retirement due to injury.

Deselection.

Four athletes were deselected. Maureen and Beverley from State level, and Julie and Jeanette, having made the State team, did not regain Australian level. For Maureen deselection at State level also meant she would not retain Australian selection. Each of the players chose not to stand for selection again at either State or Australian level.

Beverley, who only missed out on State selection was the only player who continued to play A grade netball after the completion of that season's commitments. Maureen and Jeanette returned briefly to play the game at a lower level, at a later stage in their life. Julie chose never to play netball again after completing that season's commitments, not even at a social level.

All four of the deselected athletes have some residual feelings of imbalance about the deselection. Maureen and Beverley felt that their performance did not merit the selection they gained the previous year but their performance did merit selection in the year they failed. Beverley explained:

I felt I was playing better that year than I was the year before.

Julie and Jeanette believed that internal politics played a part in their deselection. Jeanette believed it was a decision based on a policy of exchanging older players for younger players from the recently established Australian Institute of Sport. Jeanette felt that the hierarchy of the Australian Institute of Sport needed to justify the expense of training these athletes by demonstrating results in Australian selections. This, she believed, was the motive for the decision not to include her in the team. Jeanette described her situation as follows:

There was a fairly big movement in the politics in sport then in the Institute programs. It seemed like a lot of money was being invested into the programs yet the players were not making the Australian teams. The likes of us, "the kids from the local" were making the teams. The move was made, out with the old and in with the new.

Julie is not sure what the politics were that led to her exclusion. It is the only justification Julie has for her deselection as she believed everyone was shocked at the

announcement of the team when they realised that she had been excluded.

All harbour a sense of injustice to varying degrees and, given that no explanation was provided for their deselection, it is not hard to understand why that feeling of injustice exists and the doubts about their ability linger. As Julie stated:

The imbalance in your mind, the doubt, and that's the killer, it eats away at you. It is a destructive force.

Ogilvie and Taylor (1993a, p. 358) found the experience of deselection to have a "powerfully negative emotional impact". This has been experienced in netball where no explanations were given to deselected players, as was the case for Jeanette and Julie, both had made the State team and did not retain Australian selection. The responses of these two players may be due, in part, to the level of commitment they gave to netball and their prior status as elite athletes. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) suggest that the consequences of deselection may be far reaching. The long term results for these players will be discussed further in the section which discuss how the players have dealt with the experience during and post retirement.

Employment Obligations and Opportunities.

Gladys and Alice were employed by the Education Department and had their netball careers brought to a premature close due to the policies of their employer at the time. In Gladys' case, the Headmaster of the school at which she

taught, who had sole authority to grant leave at his school, refused permission for Gladys to attend the National Championships. His explanation was that Gladys had other responsibilities, including her teaching commitments and her role as coach of the school's netball team. Gladys explained her position as follows:

It wasn't my decision, I was told. In those days the principal had all the say. He wouldn't give his permission for me to go on with the State team. So, I had no alternative.

Alice was about to begin her first teaching assignment and, instead of receiving a posting to the metropolitan area where she could continue to train and gain selection in the State netball team, she was posted to the country. This made attendance at training and retention of State Team selection impossible. Alice explained that at that time a student was "bonded" to the Education Department and failure to take up your allotted position required repayment of University fees which had been prepaid by the Education Department. This was not an option for Alice. She also recognised that the limited number of careers available to women at the time would restrict her future, if netball was chosen ahead of this career. Alice explained her reaction to the situation as follows:

I felt I hadn't been able to make the choice. In those days it was very much cut and dried. Most of the girls who came from the country were given city posts and vice versa.

Injury.

Rosemary experienced three factors which combined to bring her netball career to a premature end. First, with two successful years in the State Open team she was just beginning her elite netball career when a serious shoulder injury prevented her from playing. The nature and severity of the injury, which was sustained outside netball, removed her from the game.

Shortly after the injury occurred Rosemary was offered employment which she could not reject partly because of her socio-economic situation and partly because, at that time, socially, it was not considered wise to refuse employment. The employment further restricted her opportunities to play as transport from work to training became more difficult.

The third change in circumstance was the relocation of her family to a country area where netball was not played. When employment circumstances permitted, Rosemary was required to join her family and, for many years, this meant she was not able to play netball. Later she returned to the game but only at a social level. The combination of these circumstances put an end to Rosemary's netball career and, in the absence of social support, the developing athlete identity and ego associated with sport success, was crushed. As stated by Pearson and Petitpas (1990),

If the retirement comes toward the end of the career span typical of the sport, it will be more on time (and less disruptive) than if it happens close to the beginning of the athletic career. (p. 9)

This issue may also have had an effect on the netball careers of Julie and Jeanette. Although each had a considerable State Open netball career record, for both, their Australian netball careers, which were just beginning to develop, were prematurely stopped. In the era in which Julie and Jeanette played, the Australian netball team only toured every four years, firstly, because of funding restrictions and, secondly, due to the limited development of netball at International level. Both had hoped to be selected in the Australian team, in a year of an International tour, in order to confirm their position by proving themselves on the International court. Instead they suffered deselection and this goal was, therefore, never achieved.

Five of the seven athletes believed at the time of their retirement that the timing was wrong and they were not expecting the change. Maureen and Beverley were the only players who felt they had some control and the timing was right for them to concentrate on other activities.

Voluntary Retirement

Ogilvie and Taylor (1993b, p. 768) assert that "strong empirical evidence supports the importance of control in career termination". Eight players in the study had internal control over the decision to retire, however, just as it was an experience which was individual in nature with common elements for the players who retired due to external influences, so it was with these players. Each player had made the previous State team. The one common experience for these players is that although the decision was hard to

make, the timing was right. An outline of the decision process as described by these players during interview is provided in Table 5 and then each of the factors which influenced their decision to retire voluntarily from netball is discussed.

Table 5

Retirement Decision Process - Voluntary Retirement

Name of Player	Decision Process Trigger
Joan	Timing right Alternatives valued
Lorraine	Timing right Alternatives valued Achieved goals
Jennifer	Timing right Alternatives valued Achieved goals Younger players
Stephanie	Tournament not enjoyed Alternatives valued Finance needed
Trudy	Timing right Peers retiring Young players
Carolyn	Tournament not enjoyed Peers retiring Alternatives valued
Katherine	Timing right Achieved goals Alternatives valued
Nicole	Burnt out Time commitment to training too high Performance and attitude declining Alternatives valued Achieved goals

Timing.

A positive view of any transition usually results in reduced generation of stress (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990). While the players who had internal control over the retirement decision may have some regrets about leaving netball they all had a positive view of the alternatives. For most it was simply a matter of time. They felt that their life was changing and other priorities were more highly valued. Many had a husband or future husband in their life and, although not directly influenced by him, admit that they wanted to spend more time with him rather than spend their time committed to more netball. The following example, from Joan, demonstrated the feeling of several of the players when they decided to retire from elite netball.

I think at that stage I was in for my life I had recently got married and I just wanted to change direction.

All who had internal control, voluntarily retired at an age which was consistent with the general exit of netball players in their generation. The timing of their retirement from netball was consistent with Neugarten's (1976) concepts of "on time" (for example, death of a parent in late adulthood) and "off time" (for example, having a parent die while one is still a child) life events. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) concluded as a result of their research that:

Generally, an "on time" life event, however difficult, will be less stressful than the same event occurring at a developmentally atypical point. (p. 8)

Valued alternatives.

The Sport Commitment Model (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons and Keeler, 1993) proposed that:

Athletes reflect on the alternative(s) as a choice between the current activity and others. Having more attractive alternatives is predicted to lower sport commitment. (p.7)

This was the case for the players who voluntarily retired in the present study. This change in priorities is supported by Allison and Meyer (1988), Blinde and Greendorfer (1985), Ogilvie and Taylor (1993a), and Werthner and Orlick (1986). The intensity of commitment required to continue at the high standards they had set for themselves was found wanting as other priorities took over. Carolyn's discussion on what factors influenced her to retire provides an example of this decision process.

I think I was really questioning whether I was really enjoying this any more ... perhaps also I had other priorities once I got married and so on. I wanted to spend more time with Graham. My priorities changed a bit I didn't want to train seven times a week.

Nearly all players stressed that their playing commitment did not alter, it was just a point in time when they felt they needed to change direction which impacted on their commitment to continue. The need to stress this point may indicate a need to assure themselves and others of their loyalty and competence up until they retired.

Peers retiring.

The issue of peers retiring at the same time was evident in many retirements, however, only Trudy and Jennifer

acknowledged that it was part of the decision to retire. To nearly all the players the "bond" with peers was, and still is, strong. Trudy's statement provides evidence of this.

In the club situation we were in, all the girls, in the side I played in over the years, we were all the same age and a lot of us retired at one time and so it was like friendship and it was time to go.

Younger players.

Whereas Mihovilovic (1968) found that the athletes in his Yugoslavian soccer study actively fought against the entry of younger players into the team, two netball players stated that standing aside to allow younger players to advance was one of the factors that influenced their retirement. Jennifer and Trudy felt that by staying they were restricting the progress of young players and therefore stepped down to allow them access. Trudy explained:

It was probably time to step aside for the young up and coming players.

Other players, while not suggesting that this was one of their reasons for retiring, acknowledged the need for older athletes to step aside and allow young players to advance. This response supports disengagement theory (Cumming and Henry, 1961) which proposes that older members step aside for the younger members to their mutual satisfaction. However, the long term response may be different, as Trudy and Jennifer now have some question in their mind in regard to the validity of this action.

Burn Out.

Nicole was the only player to retire because she was burnt out. The reasons for Nicole's decision to retire were numerous, the most significant being that she was tired of the excessive amount of training, especially as it left no time for any other activities. A social life outside netball was becoming a more valued alternative. As these demands conflicted in her mind Nicole felt her attitude and performance had dropped to a point that was not acceptable to her. Nicole stated:

One night before training I just felt, I just don't want to go.

This decision was not made quickly. The coach, her mother and friends had all been consulted. In the end Nicole knew the decision was hers and, hard as that was, Nicole acknowledges that she got through it with the support of her family and friends.

Few other players sought the advice of others when making the retirement decision, however, many mentioned the fact that their decisions were supported by family members. None of the athletes recalled any animosity or negative reactions by the other players when they withdrew from netball and, in fact, most remain in social contact with their netball peers. This supports other research which has found that social support at the time of retirement is important to successful transition (Coakley, 1983; Werthner and Orlick, 1986).

Achieved goals.

All of these athletes chose to retire after they had achieved their goals in netball. Although some of them realised that they could have been selected in future teams, they had achieved what they had set out to achieve and felt that other issues were now more important. The achievement of goals has been shown to contribute positively to transition (Sinclair and Orlick, 1993; Werthner and Orlick, 1986). A quote from Stephanie explained the importance to a player of achieving their goals before they retire.

I had a good innings, I had enjoyed it, I'd reached my goals, we were successful right through ... that was the main thing that I had succeeded in my goals.

Comparison of Voluntary and Involuntary

Two distinct differences between retirements which were involuntary and those which were voluntary were found to exist in the experiences of these players. The first difference was that the players who had internal control and chose to retire voluntarily were also able to choose the timing of the event. Those who did not have control over the decision to retire were also left without control over the timing of the retirement. The second difference was that those who had internal control generally had achieved their goals, before they retired. Those who did not have control over the decision had not achieved all their goals and were unhappy to be left without having the chance to do so. Both of these factors, the timing and the

achievement of goals, had an effect on their initial response to retirement.

The factors which led the former elite netball players to retire were different for the individual and were influenced by whether the retirement was involuntary or voluntary. Those who experienced involuntary retirements retired due to three primary factors: (a) deselection; (b) employment obligations and opportunities; and (c) injury. For those who voluntarily retired the reasons for their exit were more numerous and this may be due to the fact that they had time to think why they wanted to retire, rather than being forced to contemplate the reasons after external influences had given them little choice. The primary factors which influenced this group of players to retire were: (a) timing; (b) valued alternatives available; (c) peers retiring; (d) young players; (e) burnout; and (f) goals achieved.

Although it is suggested that for those in team sports the process is usually involuntary and initiated by management (McPherson, 1993) the results of this study have shown a balance between involuntary and voluntary exits. The reasons for the level of control each player had over their retirement will now be discussed, commencing with the group who involuntarily retired and then proceeding to the group who retired voluntarily.

In summary, the ability to have internal control over the decision to retire does not guarantee smooth transition, however, nor does external control signal disastrous

consequences. It is the combination of all influencing factors, as Schlossberg's (1984) Model of Transitions so clearly portrays, that influences the outcome for each individual. It can, however, be stated from the findings of this and other research (Blinde and Greendorfer, 1985; Coakley, 1983; Hill and Lowe, 1974; McPherson, 1993) that internal control is more likely to provide the positive initial response and attitude to retirement required to assist the player in achieving successful transition from elite sport. How the players initially reacted and responded to the challenges that retirement presented are discussed in the next section.

The Experience of Retiring From Elite Netball

This section will discuss the findings of research question two which relates only to the initial reaction to the retirement, the longer term reactions will be discussed when answering research question five about the players post retirement responses. The players in this study experienced either or both positive and negative reactions to their retirement. This section will provide the negative reactions and positive reactions to retirement and a discuss the mixed reactions players had to retirement.

Negative Reactions to Retirement from Elite Netball

Four athletes initially experienced negative reactions to retirement. Their experiences, while generally very different in nature, had one common element. Although they all had alternatives available, these could not replace the

value the players had given to netball in their life. The reasons for the negative reactions to retirement by the players in this study were complex and not isolated to one issue. Each of the reasons for this response will now be discussed.

Alternatives not valued.

All four of the players found that the alternatives they had of family, careers and, in one case, other sports could not replace Netball. Katherine chose to retire to start a family yet found the loss of identity very difficult. She stated that:

Going from playing that, to being just a Mum, you've lost an identity.

This reaction is consistent with other athletes' experience of losing an identity which they feel cannot be recovered (Werthner and Orlick, 1986).

Katherine then transferred her skills to coaching. This role did not however, give her the same satisfaction as playing and it was more of a problem than she had anticipated. Katherine described her feelings about coaching like this:

I hated it. Sorting out all these people. Who was going to play and who wasn't going to play and how well were they training.

Although there is evidence that transferring skills into other areas may be of assistance to athletes retiring from sport (Hill & Lowe, 1974; Mihovilovic, 1968), it is apparent from this example that the area into which those

skills are transferred must satisfy the needs and skills of the individual.

Deselection and injury.

For the other three athletes the retirement decision had been forced on them, two by deselection and one through injury and personal circumstances. They were not ready to retire, had not achieved their goals and the timing was not of their choosing. Theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that career termination difficulties are more likely to occur among those whose retirements are caused by age, deselection or injury (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b).

Of these three players, Jeanette and Rosemary did not play Netball, even at a social level for several years. Julie after completing her netball commitments for that season chose never to play again. For Julie deselection made the retirement process traumatic. She saw her life, which was her netball, fall apart around her and it left her in what she describes as, "so much pain and grief for that loss" that she could not continue to play netball. An extract of Julie's comments are important as it demonstrates why Ogilvie and Taylor (1993b) consider this topic is worthy of study.

I wasn't ready for it. For me I had planned my career and it tumbled down on me like a wall tumbling down around me. I didn't know what to do basically. I didn't know what to do and I was devastated.

When asked if there had been anyone there to support her Julie explained:

No, people asked me but I just closed off.

When prompted by the interviewer to explain if she understood why she had reacted in this way. Julie replied:

Oh, I just couldn't handle the pain and the grieving. I never went through a grieving process, because I mean it was your life, it was a huge part of one's life and all of a sudden it wasn't there any more and I didn't know what to fill it with.

Julie's reactions to retirement relate to Kubler-Ross' (1969) theory which suggests that dying individuals proceed through a series of five stages as they prepare for the inevitable ending: (1) shock and denial, (2) anger, (3) bargaining, (4) depression and (5) acceptance. When first faced with deselection Julie was in shock, it had not occurred to her that she would not make the team. She then denied that her dream of playing for Australia would be not fulfilled, and began bargaining that someone would get hurt and she would play, however, this did not eventuate. Her next response was to avoid the consequences of the event by not mentioning its existence or being near the netball environment. Much later, when her life was not fulfilled she recognised her negative view of the future and turned to counselling. With this assistance a level of acceptance has been achieved; however, the assimilation of the event and its impact on her life have taken their toll and complete acceptance may never be a reality.

Without individual experiential data, those in a position to help will not be prepared for these sort of responses and cannot be in the best position to assist effectively. As Schlossberg (1984, p. 110) suggested,

"helping depends on integrating knowledge of adult development with the process skills of helping". The counsellor asked to help an athlete must understand the development of the athlete identity, general adult development and possible responses to retirement.

When asked about their preparation for life without elite netball the responses were not surprising. Most had given no thought to what they were going to do. This is not uncommon and is often the cause of many of the problems associated with adjustment. Preparation is, however, widely asserted to be an essential component of effective career transition (Coakley, 1983; Hill and Lowe, 1974; Pearson and Petitpas, 1990).

Lack of preparation.

Retirement was not consciously planned by any of the players and some found that the alternatives to playing netball were not always as highly valued. One of the most common problems that lack of preparation caused was that it left a "gap". Jeanette found the most positive part of the transition was when this gap was filled by getting involved in something else, particularly as her status as an athlete was valued in the new environment. As she explained:

The most positive transition was once I found enjoyment getting involved back into the local community. Having some status as an athlete was certainly an advantage, so I used it to turn negatives into positives.

Three players found that lack of preparation also meant that they lacked specific skills which caused problems in responding to retirement. They were: (a)

financial and time management skills; (b) communication skills; and (c) education in coping strategies to deal with retirement.

Time management skills would have been useful for all participants who found a gap in their life. These, along with coping strategies and the support structure desired to assist with issues as they arise in the process of retirement, are now available through programs such as Australian Institute of Sports' SportsLEAP as discussed in the literature review. These were not available when these players were at this stage, nor are there any courses available specific to those leaving sport who are outside the Australian Institute of Sport structure. However, it is apparent that the need for them exists.

Most players at the time of retirement had some support available through family and/or friends. In some instances though, neither the athlete or those available to support the athlete were equipped to help. Julie's husband wanted to help, however, he felt that she should be given the first opportunity to mention the subject, he did not realise that she was not in a emotional condition which allowed her to do so. As Julie explained:

My husband didn't know what to do. He was waiting for me and I didn't know ... I couldn't verbalise anything I was just numb from the pain ...

Players who found themselves in this position all felt that the availability of sports psychologists to help today's athlete is a positive step forward. These comments confirm that the preparation in this research to offer a support service to the players in this study was well founded.

Julie felt that the availability of this type of service at the time of her retirement could have made a critical difference to her future.

I think that would have been a critical moment in my life, if that was available, it would have probably changed my direction in life.

While there are sport psychologists available to athletes in general, programs specific to elite netball players are generally confined to the Institute of Sport scholarship holders. Many players in the study felt that support services, for those outside the Australian Institute of Sport programs, could be facilitated through a players' network. Julie thought this could be developed to include a mentor system incorporating past players who had had similar experiences to the athlete or athletes concerned. This will be explored further when discussing prevention/intervention programs for netball players.

Positive Reactions to Retirement from Elite Netball

Five players initial reaction to retirement from elite netball were positive. The individual reasons for this will now be discussed.

Timing.

These players were ready to retire, felt the timing was right and had valued alternatives available. Joan's comments provide an example of the typical response from this group:

I guess it was just something that I thought was natural at the time. Because I had been playing

netball for quite some time and at that stage of my life I was ready to do something different and because of the time commitment in netball, the time it took up, I didn't want to continue spending so much time at it. (Joan)

Each of the players retired at a time which was acceptable for their era of elite play. This relates to Neugarten's (1976) theory of on time and off time events. The theory proposed that on time events are less likely to present a traumatic event as they do not upset the sequence and rhythm of the life cycle.

Achieved goals.

All of these players had achieved their primary netball goals prior to retiring. All mentioned this as a component of their decision process and was found to be an important issue for them. A quote from Lorraine provided evidence of this:

Well when I retired, I had made the State team and the Australian team that year, and that was the same year I had planned to go overseas on a working holiday.

Alternatives valued.

These players had alternatives available which they valued and this made retiring from netball more positive for them. Maureen provided an example of this reaction:

There were lots of things that were exciting, that you wanted to do. It didn't worry me, it was just one day I didn't have to go to training.

Knowing when to quit.

Another important characteristic found among those with internal control over the decision to retire, was that when they had achieved their goals they felt that, although they

could have made more teams, they needed to acknowledge that it was time to quit. Knowing when to quit is a issue which Kearl (1975) felt was a key element of successful retirement. Kearl found that those who stayed too long often discredited their entire career and that it was better to retire voluntarily than be deselected as physical performance dwindled.

McPherson (1993) suggested that a select few know when to retire, most hang on as long as possible as they fear loss of identity or being labelled a "quitter". Netball players tended not to hang on to elite netball once their performance declined.

For some of the players who initially responded positively to retirement from elite netball the experience was not perfect, they did experience some negative feelings, however, their initial responses were positive.

Mixed Reactions of the Players to Retirement from Elite Netball

Six players initial reactions to retirement from elite netball were a combination of positive and negative responses. For Gladys and Alice the retirement was involuntary and career related. The lack of control over the decision caused initial negative responses, of disappointment and sadness, however, as they had highly valued alternatives available they successfully made the initial transition out of elite netball. The players continued to play at a lower level and transferred their skills to coaching. While Gladys found coaching very

rewarding Alice did not. Gladys' comments about transferring her skills into coaching were:

Very keen and interested in my career, netball coaching.

Beverley had been deselected and although she admits that she had expected to continue and was hurt and disappointed by the decision it made no real difference to her life. Beverley decided not to stand for selection again but continued to play grade netball. Having other commitments in her life, such as family and work, she was quite happy to give elite netball away. This reaction may be consistent with what Schlossberg (1984, p. 46) refers to as a *nonevent*. The selection was counted on but did not occur. As netball was still available at a lower level the transition did not cause her undue concern.

Carolyn had questioned whether she was still enjoying playing at the elite level anymore and had other priorities which were competing for her time. Feeling ready to leave she retired. Afterwards she found it hard to adapt to the sense of loss that remained. Carolyn explained this as follows:

You do have that sense of loss. I relate it to when I was pregnant and left work to have my first child, my initial reaction was, "Who am I now?"

Jennifer had a similar response. Alternatives were available and she felt it was time to let go particularly as her peers were retiring and young players were waiting to come through. Although the alternatives held many

challenges and distracted her from netball she still found that she missed the competition and competing at that level. Jennifer said:

It does leave a gap, even in London although things were new, I found I was used to training all the time, all of a sudden I wasn't out training. I really missed the competition and competing at that level but knowing there were other experiences I was having it wasn't as bad as it would have been if I had been there.

Nicole retired due to burnout. The decision to leave elite netball was very difficult and she was devastated at the need to leave. The pressure of a intensive training schedule had taken its toll and Nicole found her performance and attitude declining. With very little time for a social life, she began to question the value of her involvement in elite netball. After comparing the positive and negative elements of staying she decided to leave and although this was difficult she immediately transferred her netball skills into coaching and administration of netball at a lower level and found this very rewarding. The additional time for social life and new friends fulfilled her need for companionship outside netball and has been extremely helpful to Nicole's transition out of elite netball.

Synthesising the results it was found that the experience of retiring from elite netball and the reaction to the event was different for each individual; however, there were common elements. The players initial responses were varied for two main reasons: (a) the availability of

alternatives and the value they had to the players at the time of their retirement; and (b) the control they had over the decision to retire. McPherson (1993) suggested that athletes offer themselves few opportunities to invest their ego in other activities that could bring similar satisfaction and ego gratification. This may explain the different perspective the players had on the value of alternatives. That is, for some, although the alternatives were present and valued, they had at the time of retirement not invested their ego into these activities.

The control over the decision to retire immediately affected other important issues such as timing, goal attainment and preparation. Each of these factors had a substantial effect on the long term responses of the players.

Schlossberg (1984) suggested that the process of dealing with a major life event is not fixed, it is a transition. As each of the players related their story it became apparent that each had reassessed their position over time and were still making further reassessments.

The experiences of the players were variable, supporting the contention of Schlossberg (1984) in the Model of the Individual Transition that the response to a major change in one's life will have impact from the individual, the environment and the transition itself. Refer to Figure 2 in the literature review, or to Appendix J for the detail of the factors within Schlossberg's model.

It is with the progression of time and the assimilation of the effect of retirement from elite

netball, together with the other life experiences encountered, that most accommodate a more permanent view of their experience. Before discussing the post retirement effects, however, the research question which sort to find the specific factors which hindered or assisted the players in the transition out of elite netball will be discussed.

Factors Found Which Hinder Or Assist the Player in Transition From Elite Netball

The individual nature of each retirement and the individual character of each player provide the opportunity for many different factors to arise which hinder or aid them in the transition out of elite netball. The issues raised by the players are discussed to raise the awareness of these influences and to show which should be avoided or captured to ensure the best possible response to retirement from elite netball. The hindrances encountered by the players are discussed first, followed by those factors which aided the transition.

Hindrances to Transition

The athletes' responses to this question varied from those who experienced no significant negative influences to those who had one or many which caused problems. Six of the former elite players were fortunate to have no major hindrances with their transitions out of elite netball. All of these players had alternatives, which they valued, available to them at the time of their retirement. The other nine athletes had different experiences, each equally

worthy of mention. They are, therefore, summarised in Table 6 at the end of this section.

The hindrances to the transition out of elite netball which caused the most severe long term effects were: (a) loss of status; (b) lack of education; (c) isolation; and (d) inability to express emotions. Each of these will be elaborated upon as this may help others to avoid their consequences if they are identified and dealt with as soon as possible after onset.

Loss of status and identity.

The perception that people no longer know your identity or respect you as an athlete was experienced by some athletes. Katherine's comments provide an example of this:

Young ones don't know who you are and you sort of feel a little bit, 'Well, who am I?' You start questioning yourself, 'Well who am I?' I'm just another person, I never really [did anything special]

Katherine found the most difficult part of retiring from elite netball to be the loss of status and identity. This supports Gorbett's (1985) contention that the loss of the athletic role engenders, in some athletes, a loss of being important to others.

Education.

Many athletes neglect, or do not value, their education as much as their athletic pursuits and this may cause them problems later in their life. Empirical studies have shown this to be the case (Haerle, 1975; Lerch, 1981; McPherson, 1993; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b; Sinclair and Orlick, 1993).

Fortunately, most of the former elite netball players in this study were able to combine successfully their netball careers with their tertiary studies or their work. This often meant careful time management on their part and many indicated that it was a relief to them that they had been able to combine successfully the experiences. Only Jeanette had not gained sufficient education or work stability prior to the end of her netball career. This insufficiency became a major hindrance to her successful transition out of elite netball. Jeanette's response to the question on hindrance was, "education". When asked if she had given it up at some stage, her explanation was:

I had never given it up. I never had it at the beginning. Because I put so much commitment into my netball, as far as employment was concerned, if the job didn't suit the training commitments, the job went. So I suffered when I came off.

When asked if the sacrifices she made for netball would be something she would repeat, Jeanette's response was:

Yes, it is part and parcel of sport, sacrifices have to be made, it really all comes down to how big a price you are prepared to pay.

This attitude is one many athletes would recognise, but the long term costs are often higher than the athlete anticipates. Most intervention programs now alert athletes to the potential problems that lack of attention to education and careers can cause. The programs try to

provide alternatives to the athlete which allow them to maintain both elite athletics and career path options.

Isolation.

This encompassed both physical and mental isolation from netball for Rosemary. Injury, followed by a family shift away from the metropolitan area to a place where netball was not played and media coverage was minimal, made the isolation complete. Unable to play the game she loved, starved of information and contact with the netball community, Rosemary struggled. The timing of the retirement was wrong, there was no support around her, no avenue to communicate her feelings, and not even her family seemed aware or interested, it was a subject never discussed. This made life very difficult in an era which was not as open as today. Rosemary explained the situation as follows:

Let's face it, the psychological problems then weren't resolved by psychologists. In those days you just toughed it out.

This was Rosemary's only coping strategy against the barrage of externally controlled issues which stopped her netball career.

Inability to express emotions.

An issue, which many athletes find difficult, is expressing how they feel. This can become more evident when trying to explain the emotions they have in dealing with retirement from sport. Often they feel that they are meant to be mature and able to cope with life, yet they cannot, and this creates further feelings of inadequacy. Those

available to listen are often more than willing to help, but they all too often don't have the necessary resources and skills to assist. Julie, who experienced this, felt a failure, due to deselection. She found she could not communicate her emotions to anyone and the only way to cope was to withdraw. When the interview began with Julie the emotion spilled out; it was a moment of recognition, by her, that the process of dealing with the hurt is not over, nearly twenty years later. The major hindrance to Julie's adjustment was explained like this,

My inability to deal with the pain and the grief, my inability to express my hurt and feeling about the hurt ... I'm good at closing off; it was a survival mechanism, I could only deal with so much.

After deselection there is rarely, if ever, an explanation of the reasons, and thus, no opportunity for the athlete to respond to what is a significant blow to their self esteem. Today, even with programs like SportsLEAP in place and open to former athletes, there is no known direct contact made by the administrators of these programs to offer assistance. It is almost certain that the same inability to communicate would ensure that no constructive action would be taken by the athlete. This would often mean that the athlete would be left to cope by alone or, if they are fortunate, they may find an understanding, if not skilled, family member or friend to assist.

Significant others.

At the time of their retirement the decision was individual, however, three significant other groups did negatively influence the decisions of the some of the former elite netball players. Those who negatively influenced the decision causing involuntary retirement included: (a) the selectors, who triggered the retirement response of four athletes; (b) the Education Department, whose policies prevented the participation of two others who then retired from elite play; and (c) parents, who relocated to an area which did not allow the sport to be played at any level. For most of those who experienced retirements influenced by others, the effects were greater, more negative and were valid for a much longer duration. Rosemary and Julie took ten and fifteen years respectively, to recover sufficiently to begin to let elite netball go, however, the consequences still have residual effects today.

Table 6
Hindrances to Transition

Name of Player	Hindrance	Duration of effect
Alice	Lack of control over decision	Short term
Julie	Inability to communicate	Long term
Stephanie	Lack of time management skills	Short term
Jennifer	Standard not high still felt competent	Short term
Rosemary	Isolation/Lack of control/poor timing	Long term
Katherine	Loss of status and identity	Long term
Jeanette	Lack of sufficient education, and career stability	Long term
Nicole	Missing peers, "full on" Netball	Short term

Strategies Which Assisted Transition

The major positive influences on the adjustment process of the former elite netball players came from four sources. They were: (a) valued alternatives; (b) support from others; (c) continued involvement in sport; and (d) physical isolation.

Valued alternatives.

Most had some alternatives outside netball which they valued and these helped fill the gap and keep the athletes busy. The alternatives varied from personal relationships, family, careers to social activities. The decrease in time commitment, gained by retirement from elite netball, meant that they had more time to spend socially with other people. This contributed positively to their adjustment, a

factor which was also evident in Allison and Meyer's (1988) study of female tennis professionals.

Support.

Support of family and friends was one of seven common factors which Werthner and Orlick (1986) found had an important role in determining the nature of transition out of sport. The participants in their study who did not have this support spoke of more difficult transitions.

Although the players in this study did not often make specific mention of the support role of others at the time of their retirement, they did acknowledge the need they had for support during the years when they were at elite level and that their families and friends did provide support to them after they retired. An example of this is given by Stephanie when discussing the decision to retire:

I never discussed it with anybody, it was just something I did and everybody sort of fell into place. I had had a lot of my parents' support right up until then. My parents they supported whatever I did anyway.

There was only one player who mentioned that she felt that her family was not supportive, and that was Rosemary. Her family did not discuss the retirement from elite netball. This may have just been the way her parents felt that she could best deal with the situation. It did, however, leave her isolated from both her family and netball, and this made her transition more difficult.

Continuing involvement in netball or an alternative sport.

Without exception, the former elite netball players, felt a need to continue to play sport or keep fit after they

retired and this became a necessary component to their positive transition. Some of the former elite netball players continued to play netball outside the elite forum, others transferred their skills to other areas to remain involved, while others took up an alternative sport. The need to stay fit is described by Jeanette like this:

I haven't done anything physical. It's the first time I haven't participated in any team or played or done anything. I don't like it, I feel absolutely ... It has been good for me but I feel revolting. I'm so unfit it's a joke, so I'm going to get back into it.

Many found that staying involved in other capacities such as coaching and administration had also helped. Most still had considerable contact with their peers. An active interest in the game was maintained through following the performances of the Western Australian and Australian teams.

Isolation.

Whereas forced isolation from netball and lack of alternatives hindered one of the players, Rosemary, in the present study, four other players found that physical isolation from the playing environment made the adjustment process easier. One of these players, Alice, was also forced into isolation due to a work career transfer. For Alice two factors made her situation more positive; netball was available in the town and visits could be made quite regularly to Perth to "fill in" on Saturdays and her work career was highly valued.

Exploring a new environment gave the players new alternatives and provided a distraction from netball

retirement. This is consistent with Orlick and Werthner's (1987) advice to athletes in transition where they suggest the athletes plan an initial period of getting "away from it all" in recognition that there will probably be a down period after retirement.

Significant others.

Although the decision to retire was made by the individual player at the time, there were others who had an impact on that decision. For those who voluntarily retired, the following groups positively influenced that decision: (a) the husbands who did not seek any direct influence; however, their presence made the alternative of not playing more attractive, as the time made available by the decision to retire could be spent with them; (b) peers who were also retiring prompted others to consider the same action; and (c) the younger players who were waiting for places to become available to them.

The issues raised in the present study as hindering or assisting the athletes in transition are comparable to those already found and referenced in Appendix C from the existing literature. The only new issue to emerge was the inability of Julie to communicate to others her emotional response to deselection. This proved to be a serious hindrance to Julie's transition from elite netball. As this may also be a substantial barrier to other players transition it requires further investigation and consideration in the formation of prevention and intervention programs. The next section will discuss the

perceptions of the former elite netball players post retirement.

The Player's Self Perception and of Netball

Post Retirement

The information gathered to answer the final research question came from three primary questions. The answer to these provided the data from which the former elite netball players' view of their sport retirement experience, and of themselves, and netball post retirement were obtained. These included their answers to the questions which asked the players to: (a) look back on their decision to retire; (b) indicate whether they and others still identified with them as an athlete; and (c) discuss what their perception of netball is now that they have retired. This section will provide: (a) a general overview of the players initial and long term responses will be given; (b) a discussion of their answers to the three questions outlined; and (c) a summary of the players advice, with the benefit of experience and hindsight to the current elite players who will be retiring in the future.

Overview of Players Responses to Retirement from Elite Netball

Table 7 at the end of this section provides an overview of the players' reactions over time explaining: (a) whether the player's retirement was due to internal or external control; (b) whether their initial and post retirement responses were positive or negative, or a combination of these; and (c) whether they represented State only, or

State and Australian teams. The reason for dividing the information in this manner is to allow comparison of how the level of control effects the responses of a player both initially and over time, and the impact it has on players who represent only the State team compared with those make Australian selection. The criteria which decided whether a retirement was viewed positively or negatively by an athlete were: (a) whether their comments regarding their emotional reactions both initially to retirement and post retirement were positive or negative in nature; (b) whether their comments indicated positive or negative consequences as a result of their assimilation of their retirement experiences; and (c) whether their perception of netball has changed over time. Where players had both negative and positive emotions or other responses to retirement, either initially after their retirement or post retirement, they have been given a negative/positive rating. These results when collectively considered form a distinct pattern which is depicted in Figure 6 at the end of this section.

The player's perceptions of retirement from elite netball have changed over time, as they assimilated this event with other life experiences. Some insight into the reasons for the changed perceptions of the players will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Looking Back on Retirement

With the benefit of hindsight and the knowledge of the effects on their current lifestyle derived from the consequences of retirement, twelve of the participants now

hold positive views of the retirement experience. Ten of these had at least some internal control over the initial decision to retire.

Most of the former players have gone through a process that Schlossberg (1984) described as assimilation. Schlossberg stated that:

As an individual undergoes a transition, he or she passes through a series of phases (or stages) of assimilation, a process of moving from total preoccupation with the transition to integration of the transition into his or her life. (p. 56)

It is assumed that some would dispute that they were ever totally preoccupied with the transition. It is also assumed that all would agree that they have, as far as possible, integrated the change into their life or they are moving toward achieving this integration.

Negative responses post retirement.

For Jeanette, who retains a negative response, her feelings are of resentment. Firstly, against herself for making the decision too quickly and, secondly, against others who did not provide the support which could have given her the self confidence and motivation she needed to continue. When deselected, letting herself believe that she was no longer good enough, the retirement option was taken. Still competitive and competent as a player today, she is sure that had someone talked to her and encouraged her at that point her netball career would not have been terminated so abruptly. This is how Jeanette describes her current feelings about her retirement from elite netball:

Instead of just saying, well, obviously I'm not good enough now. Deep down in my heart I knew I could

still be very competitive. I still had enough in me, it's heart breaking.

Positive post retirement responses.

Regardless of their initial reaction to the retirement they can now see: (a) the benefits of the timing; (b) where their life choices have taken them; and (c) their satisfaction with the outcome. The following quote from Alice provides an insight into her assimilation of retirement from sport with other life experiences:

Well, I could have had at least another three good years playing Netball if the conditions had continued exactly as they were, but, once you throw in all the other things like going to the country, getting married, then everything alters.

For three of the former players who had control of the retirement decision taken from them by external influences, the post retirement view has altered. For Julie and Rosemary this view has progressed from being totally negative to a balance between negative and positive as their process of assimilation occurs. Jeanette, however, has remained negative about her retirement. A brief discussion of each of these is appropriate to gain further understanding of the underlying cause of the different perception after assimilation.

Mixed reactions post retirement.

Julie and Rosemary believe that both positive and negative outcomes have followed their retirement from elite netball. They described the current feelings they have about their retirements from elite netball as follows:

Looking back it was probably a good option for me. It led me in different directions in my life. I still

have that, "What if I had gone back?" question in my mind. What if I had persisted? Would I have fulfilled my ultimate dream? (Julie)

It doesn't bother me as much now. It took ten years to really come to the point I could let go. My life has been happy with what I've done. (Rosemary)

Schlossberg (1984) said that:

The final stage of assimilation, integration, can take several forms: renewal, acceptance, or deterioration. The degree to which the individual is pervaded and disrupted depends on the degree to which the transition has great consequences for the individual's life. (p. 61)

This may explain the different reactions by these players. Jeanette, the only athlete who remains totally negative about the experience, is still involved in netball and appears not to have had a long term career or sport outside netball. Her identity and self esteem appear to be largely dependent on the netball environment, whereas Julie and Rosemary both have functioned outside netball in either their career choices and/or sport participation. The experiences that Julie and Rosemary have had obtaining other interests may have alleviated some of the negative feelings they had associated with the lack of control over the decision to retire and the need to prove competence in netball. They also provided other avenues to invest their self worth and identity.

Residual business.

For many, there is an element of residual business, a feeling that there are matters left unfinished. Many of

the players were elite netball players when an Australian team was announced every year but only toured and played as an Australian team once every four years. For those who made Australian squads or teams in non touring years the following question remains unanswered: If I had stayed on, would I have been granted the opportunity to actually play for Australia?. These players believe that today's system, which provides a greater number of international events, which are played more regularly, assists in developing players to their potential by providing greater exposure to international competition and, as such is much better for the players. For Julie, Jeanette and Maureen the fact that they would need to continue playing at the elite level for a further four years to have any chance of regaining selection in a touring side, was a deterrent to continuing with elite netball. It appears that Julie and Jeanette may have chosen to continue for one further year to regain selection, if that would have provided them with the opportunity to fulfil their goal of playing for Australia. Julie is not sure if her fear of failing again would have prevented this, however, it is a possibility in her mind that she may have considered this option. Both Julie and Jeanette did not, however, wish to continue for a further four years with no knowledge of whether they would achieve their goals. Maureen, on the other hand, had fulfilled her goals and felt her performance was deteriorating rather than improving and as the alternatives to playing were more attractive to her, the four year tour issue was only a minor factor in not continuing with elite netball.

For those that have been deselected, the imbalance and doubt in their minds about the validity of the selection that year remains with them, even if only as a niggling doubt, it is there.

Table 7

Reactions by Players to Retirement Over Time

Name of Player	Control Int.	Ext.	Initial Reaction	Post Retirement	State Only	State & Aust.
Gladys		x	Neg/Pos	Positive	x	
Maureen	x	x	Positive	Positive		x
Joan	x		Positive	Positive	x	
Alice		x	Neg/Pos	Positive	x	
Julie		x	Negative	Neg/Pos		x
Stephanie	x		Positive	Positive		x
Beverley	x		Neg/Pos	Positive	x	
Lorraine	x		Positive	Positive		x
Jennifer	x		Neg/Pos	Positive	x	
Rosemary		x	Negative	Neg/Pos	x	
Katherine	x		Negative	Positive	x	
Jeanette	x	x	Negative	Negative		x
Trudy	x		Positive	Positive	x	
Carolyn	x		Neg/Pos	Positive		x
Nicole	x		Neg/Pos	Positive	x	

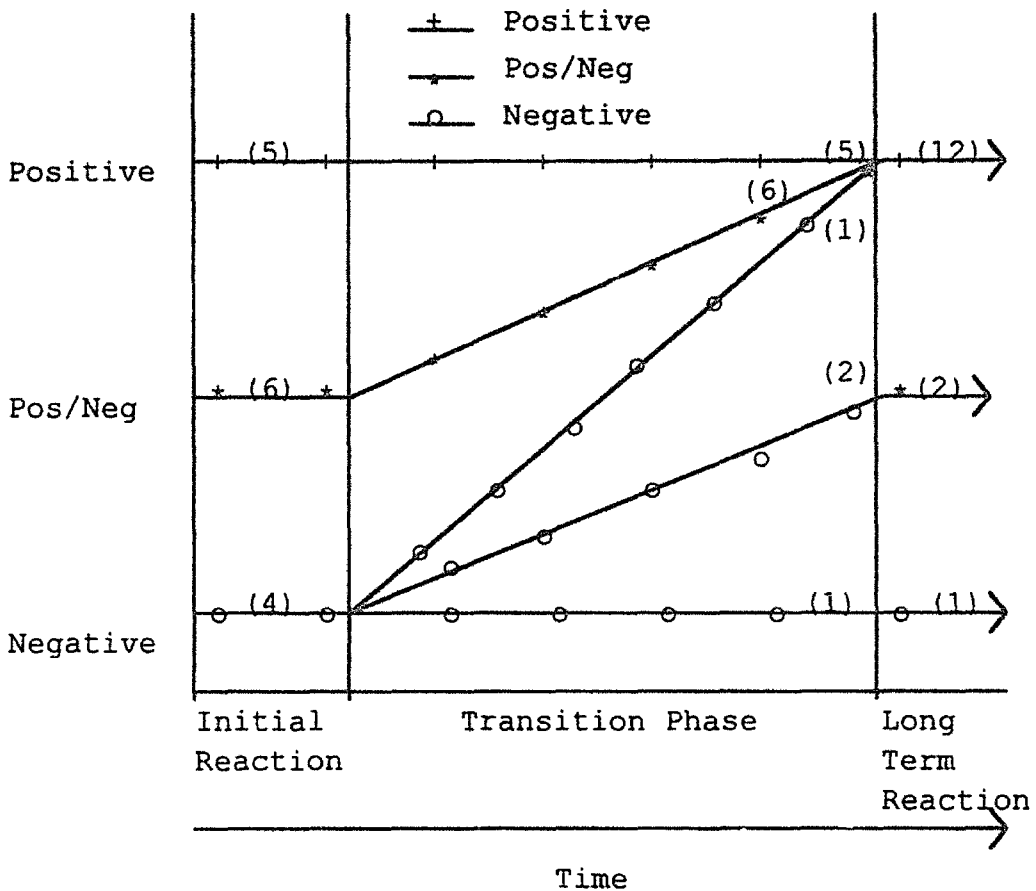


Figure 6. Players initial and long term reactions to retirement from elite Netball

Trends Within Netball

With the use of the cultural terms of the players as explained by Spradley (1979) four major characteristics of the participant's commitment to the game of netball emerged from the data gathered in this study. They were: (a) "coming back"; (b) "putting back"; (c) "filling in"; and (d) "holding back". Each one these is outlined below.

Coming back.

The first, and maybe the most notable to the retirement from sport research investigation, was the emergence of the phenomenon of coming back. With the exception of one player, coming back did not include elite level play as interpreted by this study, it only included grade netball

and/or State League. The one player who did come back to State Team play did not enjoy the experience and regrets her decision to come back to this level. This phenomenon of coming back in netball is most often prompted by pressure from coaches and fellow players. For some, the return is purely a matter of loyalty, not letting someone or the team down. For others, it is the answer to a desire to be needed, to be identified as an athlete again and prove their competence at the sport to themselves and others. The introduction of a new competition style in 1989, the State League, has also drawn many players back from retirement as the time commitments to training are less but the standard of competition is high. Many regretted that this competition was not available prior to their retirement but, when the opportunity to play arose, some years later, they have responded wholeheartedly and enjoyed the experience. For some it is a clearing of residual business by proving their competence on the court again particularly against younger players. There is also a special sentiment that comes from many players who have been able to return to play with their peers again. It appears that coming back may have positive and/or negative consequences for the player. For those whose transition was positive the first time, the consequences of retirement the second time may be negative. In this study this was due to the fact that the second retirement decision generally was because of sources not within the control of the players, such as: (a) age; (b) other commitments particularly family commitments; and (c) younger players

who are pressing for inclusion. As Carolyn found, retirement the second time can be difficult:

Harder, much harder, it's not really my choice this time to leave play. I'm not being forced out, no one is saying you can't play. I could go down and try, and I probably could still make the team, but I can't help separate that feeling of guilt. At the most I've got four or five years probably left in me and there are girls in the team that are the future state players coming through and if they get dissatisfied you might loose them from the club and I don't want that to happen. I don't want to be responsible for that.

Katherine suggested that the exercise of coming back did not achieve anything, and in fact, may have caused more problems to her and others than it was worth. As she explained:

I think I should not have come back that last time. I think it was of no value. I didn't do it for selfish reasons, I didn't really do it for myself, I did it because I thought I could help.

The reaction of these athletes, who both had internal control over the first retirement, to coming back support Sinclair and Orlick's (1993 p. 147) claim that "retiring from sport more than once is considered a liability rather than an asset". However, one of the athletes whose first retirement was externally controlled, found that returning to grade netball and receiving the award of player of the season helped her to deal with the loss of elite netball.

The diversity in these results indicate that for players who have made the transition out of elite netball successfully the first time may be better off if they do not return again to play. However, for those whose netball

careers are concluded by external forces, and are therefore involuntary, there may be the potential to regain some control and self esteem from returning to play for a short period.

Putting back.

The second characteristic which emerged is the need of these players to be putting back. As State team players they were all required to umpire and coach lower graded matches and teams. This requirement was a rule imposed on all State netball players by the Netball Association. This practice, along with the desire to be involved, is part of the reason the players feel an obligation or need to put back. For example, the following quote is how Beverley explained her reasons for putting back.

I was quite happy to go and help out or score or all those sorts of things. I wanted to try and give something back to the game that I got out of it.

All but one of the participants in this study have returned to netball, after the end of the season's commitments in the year they retired, to coach or be involved in some capacity. For many, this did not eventuate until their children began to play, when they could see that they had a level of competence and skill above others in the community. Feeling that it was inappropriate to sit back and be a spectator, they put forward their skills and knowledge to help the next generation of players. For some this was a way of releasing their netball knowledge and gaining a boost to their self esteem.

Filling in.

The third characteristic is the phenomenon of filling in. Again, pressure is put on the retired player by past coaches and fellow players who will ring around when team numbers are low and a player is needed just for a limited period. The contact while not pressurising in itself puts a demand on the player not to let others down. The past player, who knows they are competent to play but has not done so because of other commitments, succumbs to the pressure generated by the desire to play and their own sense of obligation and loyalty. Jennifer gives an example of what happens:

You will get a telephone call to say, "We're one player short, will you play?" If someone gets injured then they immediately tend to go to the ones they know, past players, as apposed to training new ones, as they are an unknown quantity. They say, come on you can do it, and you've done it before for so long, it is quite easy to go back in.

Holding back.

The last of the trends within netball to emerge was in response to the call by others for the players to get involved again. This has for some, led to the fourth characteristic which has been called holding back. Recognising the commitments they have to family and work some of the women found it difficult to go to netball at all or at least had to restrict their involvement. They felt that if they relaxed their vigilance, if only briefly, their passion for netball could consume the life they had come to value. The staying away is not easy, and given the dedication and commitment they had to the sport during

their formative years, it is very understandable. The following quote from Stephanie best described the phenomenon and the anguish that holding back can incur.

If I stretched myself to that one more commitment, that would be where I would fall down and my family depend on me.

When asked to clarify whether she felt that she needed to restrict her involvement in netball, Stephanie replied:

Yes. All the time I regret it, but it has just got to be there.

One of the factors which assisted the players in the transition from elite netball was that they were able to continue to play netball or participate in another physical activity. For some, the pressure from others for their involvement was at times stressful. Several of the players mentioned that pregnancy was found to be a good avoidance mechanism, as once peers and coaches were aware of the pregnancy, they would not ask the players to come back, fill in or put back. For example Katherine stated,

In a way it almost became the easy way out for me, to actually have the baby. Then I couldn't play. It was the only way I could see that I would not be talked into playing netball. If I'm pregnant I can't play can I!

Many of the players were still actively involved in netball or an alternative activity at the time of being interviewed and still view this as a necessary and positive contribution to their lives.

Themes emerge from the analysis. The first theme is a need of the individual player to continue involvement in

netball. This is expressed in words and actions such as "coming back". The second theme revolves around psychological issues such as obligation and loyalty which the players deal with by remaining involved in netball. The analysis provided an outline of a mutual need by the player and the netball community for each other. This may be further evidence that neither the player or the Netball Association consciously obscure retirement but rather they are subconsciously in need of each other for support. For these reasons the issues of coming back, filling in, putting back, holding back and continuing physical activity, are viewed as strategies for coping with retirement from elite netball.

With all these options there were some difficulties for the players. The most difficulty came when the players tried to replace netball with another activity. This brought reactions such as: (a) not feeling a valued player in other sports; (b) lack of competence at the new sport and impatience to become competent; (c) difficulty adjusting to social play; (d) not wanting to be an "also ran"; (e) playing with younger players who they could not relate with as well as they did with their peers; (f) difficulty in finding an activity which offered as much as playing netball; and (g) finding something that they could "love" as much as they did netball.

It appears that the players have a hierarchal structure of netball and alternate sport participation. Their preference is to be involved in elite netball, however, when this becomes untenable they choose

alternatives. Figure 7 displays the proposed hierarchal structure of these trends within netball as it is seen by the results of this research.

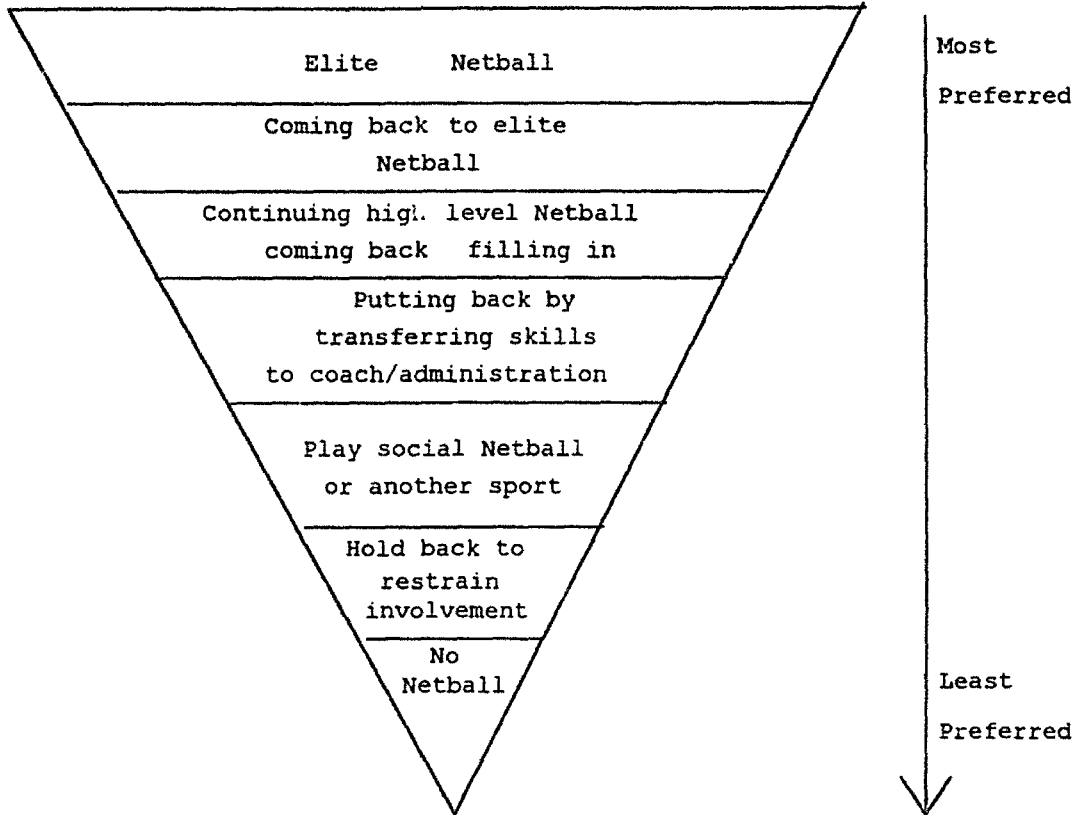


Figure 7 . Proposed hierarchal structure of former elite Netball players

The players orientation toward netball and other sport activities are similar to Curtis and Ennis' (1988) findings in their study which surveyed former Canadian Junior hockey players. They suggested that these results contradict Coakley's (1983) contention of rebirth, as they see this as reasonably implying a clear-cut change from the past, to other roles. They also contend that their results do not

agree with activity theory either as there is neither cessation of work activity nor total retirement from sport. These issues are also true of the findings in this study, where only one player did not continue or return to be actively involved in sport.

Nature of team sports.

When discussing the players perceptions of netball now they have retired many of them raised the topic of the value and or complications that playing a team sport has made to their life. This experience of participating in a team sport brought mixed reactions from the players. There are positive reactions to its characteristics of friendship, team work, its character building nature and the ability of players to motivate each other. Stephanie explained the experience of playing netball like this,

One thing that shone through when you were in a team sport, you might have thought this is the right way but the coach would say, we're a team and we are going to win and we've all got to do it the same way.

Players found that going through the highs and lows together as a team helped in the bonding process and has allowed many close friendships to continue over many years.

Negative aspects of team sports mainly resulted from difficulties in team dynamics and the time commitment needed to train with the two or three different teams they represented at the one time (ie. Australian, State and Club) due to their high level of performance. After retirement, many players found the love of netball made them unable to commit themselves to another sport. All

those who were good at another sport did not value them as highly as netball.

Jeanette found that the difficulty she had because of her experience of playing a team sport was that she often lacked personal motivation. This issue was raised when discussing the need to keep fit and Jeanette described it like this:

The most difficult thing I've found, and this is the fault of being a team member, is the self discipline. It's the whole structure of teams the bond, the friendships, and the competition with each other.

Netball - the game.

The friendships which have developed through netball for the majority have and will, according to the players, continue to be important to them. Only two of the players have no real contact with the game or peers. The majority need that contact and even those who don't keep contact with their peers keep a watchful eye on the progress of netball through the various media outlets. In particular, there is a very positive response to the television coverage and this is seen as: (a) a link between them and the game; and (b) great progress for women's sport in general, and netball, in particular.

Western Australian netball performance.

There is obvious concern for the current standing of the Western Australian State Open Netball team. This has prompted some to come back in recent years. They have come back to try and help, to be positive role models, and share

their experiences of netball when Western Australia was more competitive on the Australian circuit.

Others have different opinions of why Western Australia's netball performances are not as good today. These range from a feeling that the talent required just is not available at present, to criticism of today's players attitudes to training and learning the skills of the game, to problems they see associated with the current training regimes. Gladys made the following comments about the training regimes and external influences on the player, such as multiple coaches, physiologists, psychologists and nutritionists used by the Institute of Sport netball players today. Gladys holds the belief that this is the root cause of the decreased standard of performance in netball.

Players are doing a lot of things that are not specific to netball, such as weight training. They do so many weight training sessions a week, so much long runs, it is aerobic fitness rather than anaerobic and I think they don't make the training specific to the game.

Whatever the reasons for the downturn in Western Australia's performance there is one aspect of the current situation which had considerable support and that is the plight of the young up and coming netball player.

Young players.

Most of the former players have great concern for the young players of today. While the former players would choose Netball again if they had their time over, most of them would not like to be playing as youngsters trying to "make

it" in netball, as it is played today. Many believe there is: (a) too much pressure on the young players; (b) they are required to commit excessive time to training; (c) the amount of competition and the other responsibilities, such as coaching clinics, is too great; and (d) they are too isolated by these factors from the general community. Maureen had been discussing recently the daughter of a friend who has potential as a netball player and stated:

Where it must be hard for these players of the future, they are being isolated. They are being isolated from female as well as male friends and there wouldn't be anything that they could do that would make them part of a normal life.

Maureen felt that she would have, at 16 or 17 years of age, done everything they (the coaches and organisation of netball) told her, however, she recognised that this would have probably been at the expense of her work career. This narrow focus on netball today gives her, and many others interviewed, a level of relief that their daughters are not top netball players. This must be a warning sign for netball, if those who love, and have loved the game and achieved so much, are relieved that their children are not following in their foot steps, how does netball ensure its survival?

Work and sport retirement.

Several players compared their experiences of work and sport retirement and the perception of them varied quite considerably. The experience and perception of sport retirement was different to work retirement in the following ways: (a) sport retirement was not planned for,

whereas work retirement was consciously planned for; (b) sport retirement was not an experience which the players acknowledged until the event was close or had occurred. Work retirement was an experience they did or do look forward to; and (c) the decision and the timing of sport retirement were not always within the players control. Whereas the players had either had control or perceived they would have control over the decision, timing and consequences of work retirement.

For those who had experienced both work and sport retirement the only similarity they felt that the experiences had for them was the feeling of identity loss as a result of the change. It was surprising that they did not relate during their interview the fact that they would have seen others retire from work, this is probably as they see this more often and frequently at a closer social level, for example, the work retirement of their parents, and is therefore considered a presumed experience.

The perception that makes the players believe that they need to prepare for work retirement and that it will be a positive experience, are issues which need to be addressed when intervention and prevention programs are designed for netball players to highlight the need for a more positive and controlled exit from sport.

Athlete identity.

The final question asked to all subjects at the conclusion of Interview 3 was whether they and others still identified with them as an athlete. Self perception as an athlete was answered by a resounding "yes" by 12 out of the 17 former

players. The three players who do not perceive themselves as athletes anymore do not due to one having a back problem which prevents her from seeing herself in this capacity anymore, while the other two believe that they are ex-athletes.

When asked if others perceive them as athletes the response was similar, although some suggested that only people who knew them as a netball player would see them in this role. Most were perceived as athletes by their family members. This perception by others reinforces the identity in the mind of the athlete and also places certain responsibilities and expectations on the outcomes they achieve in any sports activity. This occurs whether the sport is their dominant game or not, as they are perceived as having a higher level of ability to perform. This also flows on to their children who are often expected to be genetically gifted with their Mother's ability and therefore expected to be good athletes without the preparation. This perception has caused some difficulty for some of the children of the former athletes.

The fact that the former players describe themselves as an athlete and the emotional and positive attachment the former players have for this athlete identity, and netball where the identity developed, has a critical influence on retirement reactions and consequences.

It has been found that many athletes develop an extremely narrow identity, with their self worth almost entirely dependent on their competence as an athlete (Crook and Robertson, 1988). Few of the former players in this

study appeared to have committed, beyond reasonable levels, to their athlete identity. However, most valued the time and experience of being an elite netball player very highly. All had developed some dependence on netball when they were young and were rewarded for their successes in the sport. However, this did not appear, in most cases, to have happened to the exclusion of other facets of their social development. It has been suggested that the more narrow the focus of the athlete is, the more they are likely to incur trauma on retirement (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Ogilvie and Howe, 1982). This may have been true for the netball players in this study who reacted negatively to the retirement, especially those who had the control of their retirement timing removed by external influences before they had had the opportunity to attain their goals. Other athletes have reported similar problems, after they retired, in assimilating the change. For example, Shane Gould Innes, Olympic swimmer and gold medallist and heroine of the Australian public, has found the reconciliation and integration of her heroine image with the "ordinary" Shane the greatest challenge in her life (Gould Innes, 1993).

Advice to Elite Female Netball Players who will Retire in the Future

Although there was reluctance by some of the former players to give advice to others, as they perceive retirement from sport as an individual experience which requires each individual to make an evaluation of their particular situation, they did raise seven important issues. All seven issues need the netball organisation to co-operate

and encourage the player. The final two, in particular, need the player to be aware of their own needs, as it is the individual player who will ultimately have control over the long term response to retirement from elite netball.

1. Maintain involvement in sport.

A suggestion made by the former elite netball players was that the current players maintain their involvement in sport, either netball or an alternative. As the majority of the players in the present study found it a positive characteristic of their retirements. The necessity to remain active for many was best achieved through Netball. This allowed them to combine the need for an active lifestyle, at a sport in which they had competence, with contact with their peers, friends and netball's progress as a sport.

2. Alternatives.

The most common advice given was that the current players should make sure that they have alternatives available, thereby maintaining a balance in their life, which will not leave them vulnerable to negative consequences when they leave netball. In view of the results from this study this advice is well founded. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) gave similar advice:

Having a sport only identity may leave some athletes with few skills other than those perfected as an athlete and the resulting lack of options can lead to adjustment difficulties. (p. 148)

3. Education.

They stressed the need for all of the current players to take care of their education so that they will have an area of competence outside netball.

4. Seek advice.

They ask that the current players not be afraid to seek advice and support when considering retirement. They particularly stressed that the athletes communicate their feelings about leaving netball as this will not only assist them, but also help others, to release any anguish they may feel about the retirement.

Many of the athletes view the provision of services, such as a sport psychologist and programs such as SportsLEAP, to be a progressive step for sport in general and those netball players within the Australian Institute of Sport system. Some regret that they were not available when they retired from netball.

5. Players network.

Some of the players proposed that a similar service be made available to those outside the AIS system, suggesting that the impact of retirement from netball on these players could equally warrant professional assistance. They suggested that this may be best served through the provision of a past players association or network, which could be administered through the Netball Association, to provide this type of support. Julie felt that this should incorporate a mentor system where past players who have experienced retirement are asked to assist another player through the process.

6. Isolation for a time.

They suggest that the players may benefit from isolating themselves from netball for a period of time. They believe this will allow the players to begin to reconcile life without elite netball, away from the constant reminders of the game nearby.

7. Know when to quit.

Several of the former players also indicated that each individual needs to be aware of when it is time for them to leave elite netball, this they suggest can be achieved by the player, by assessing their own performance and reaction to competition and training. They believe that an awareness of these issues will assist them to maintain control over the decision to retire and the timing of the decision.

These suggestions can be implemented into intervention and prevention programs which are designed for netball players and the next chapter will discuss how this could be achieved.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to provide an Australian and female perspective of elite sport retirement. To achieve this the sport retirement experiences of 15 former elite female Netball players were investigated taking account of: (a) the factors which influenced the players to retire; (b) the player's experience of retirement; and (c) the player's post-retirement perception of themselves and their sport. This chapter presents: (a) the conclusions that have been drawn on each of the five research questions; (b) factors which are seen as determinants of successful or unsuccessful retirement from elite Netball; (c) a comparison between the responses to retirement by female Australian Netball players with those reported from previous empirical studies; (d) observations of the different perceptions between work and sport retirement; (e) comparison of types of sport withdrawal; (f) the relationship between empirical data collected in this study and the theoretical propositions of previous research; (g) a set of strategies which should be considered when constructing prevention or intervention programs specific to retirement from elite Netball in Australia; (h) recommendations for future research; and (i) final comments.

Research Questions

The research questions, which were structured on the basis of relevant literature, have each been addressed and the conclusions drawn for each of these follows.

Research Question 1: What Factors Led the Players to Retire from Elite Netball?

A number of factors combined to become the catalysts for the players to retire from elite Netball. It was found that they can be grouped into two categories: (a) those which influenced the players into involuntary retirement; and those which influenced the players to retire voluntarily. The factors which influenced the players into involuntary retirement were:

1. Deselection
2. Fear of failure
3. Injury
4. Four year tours
5. Employment obligations and opportunities
6. Performance decline
7. Time commitment involved

The first four of these factors were found to produce the most negative reactions in the players. The others were generally only related to the initial decision and did not result in long term difficulties for them. For the players who did not choose to retire, a decline in performance was not recognised until after deselection and was seen as a reason not to renominate for selection. The factors which influenced the players to retire voluntarily were:

1. Timing correct for them
2. Peers retiring
3. Goals attained
4. Had valued alternatives
5. Young players
6. Time commitment involved
7. Tournament not enjoyed
8. Performance declining
9. Attitude declining
10. Burn out
11. Finances required

The most important of these to the players was the timing of the event, which was after they had attained their goals and when other valued alternatives were available. For the players who retired voluntarily, performance decline was seen as an indicator that it was time to quit.

The majority of these factors have emerged in other studies and are not unique to netball. Voluntary retirement to allow young players to advance appears to be an exception. However, further research in this area would be necessary to provide confirmation.

Research Question 2: What was the Experience of Retirement from Sport for these Former Elite Netball Players?

The former elite netball players had different reactions to retirement, some were positive while others were negative. However, the greatest difference between the experience was found when the voluntary or involuntary nature of the event was considered.

Long term negative responses were restricted to those who had experienced involuntary retirement due to deselection or injury. For these players the duration of their negative response was far longer, extending, for one player, as long as 15 years, with most of these players still having some difficulty with their experience of retirement from elite netball. A common element among these was that the alternatives available to them were not valued as highly as netball.

Those who had positive responses did not all retire voluntarily, two were deselected but as the timing was appropriate for them they chose to retire. Positive responses to retirement were related to the following facts: (a) they were ready to retire and the timing was appropriate for them; (b) they had valued alternatives available; and (c) they knew when to quit. All these players have continued to be positive about their retirement from elite netball.

Research Question 3: What Strategies were of Assistance to these Athletes when Adjusting to their Retirement from Elite Netball?

The following strategies helped the former players to adjust to their retirement:

1. Valued alternatives available
2. Isolation from the netball environment which resulted in the discovery of new interests and distractions
3. Significant others who provided alternatives to netball

4. Continued involvement in netball or an alternative sport activity
5. Support

Research Question 4: What Factors Hindered their Adjustment to Retirement from Elite Netball?

The following factors hindered the adjustment of the former players to retirement:

1. Loss of Status and identity
2. Inability to express emotions about retirement
3. Lack of education
4. Significant others who took the retirement decision away from the player
5. Isolation which restricted netball participation

Research Question 5: What are the Consequences of Sport Retirement for these Former Elite Netball Players Post Retirement?

All players had been through an assimilation process to integrate the sport retirement experience with their other life events, however, all were at different stages of this process. This was in part due to the varying length of time the players have experienced since retiring from elite Netball and in part due to their individual experiences and personalities.

Almost without exception they still identify with themselves as an athlete and this perception is supported by others around them. For many this continued identity as an athlete has contributed to the responses of coming back,

filling in, putting back and holding back. The Australian sport system, and netball in particular, which allows these responses to retirement has contributed to the positive transition of many of these players.

A positive perception of netball still exists amongst the players, although one player did hate the game for some time because of her deselection. Each former player maintains a high regard for their time as an elite Netball player, thoroughly enjoyed the camaraderie and nature of netball as a team sport. A "living, loving relationship" (Werthner and Orlick, 1982) is evident amongst the players for the game of netball. Their only negative feelings are for the plight of Western Australian netball and today's young players. They maintain a positive perception of netball's future as a game and see many of the innovations which are taking place as valuable improvements.

The results of this study have shown that 12 of the 15 former elite netball players have positive long term responses to retirement from elite netball. Two others, Julie and Rosemary have mixed responses and only Jeanette's view was negative. These results are encouraging for netball because the advantages of playing the sport are seen as outweighing most of the negative experiences. The fact that some negative responses still exist in some players who have had many years to assimilate the sport retirement experience with other experiences in their life confirms the need for prevention and intervention programs to assist netball players in their transition from elite play.

From the results of the five research questions the conceptual model presented in Chapter 1 can be expanded to represent the complex nature of the experience of retirement from elite netball. The expanded model is shown in Figure 8.

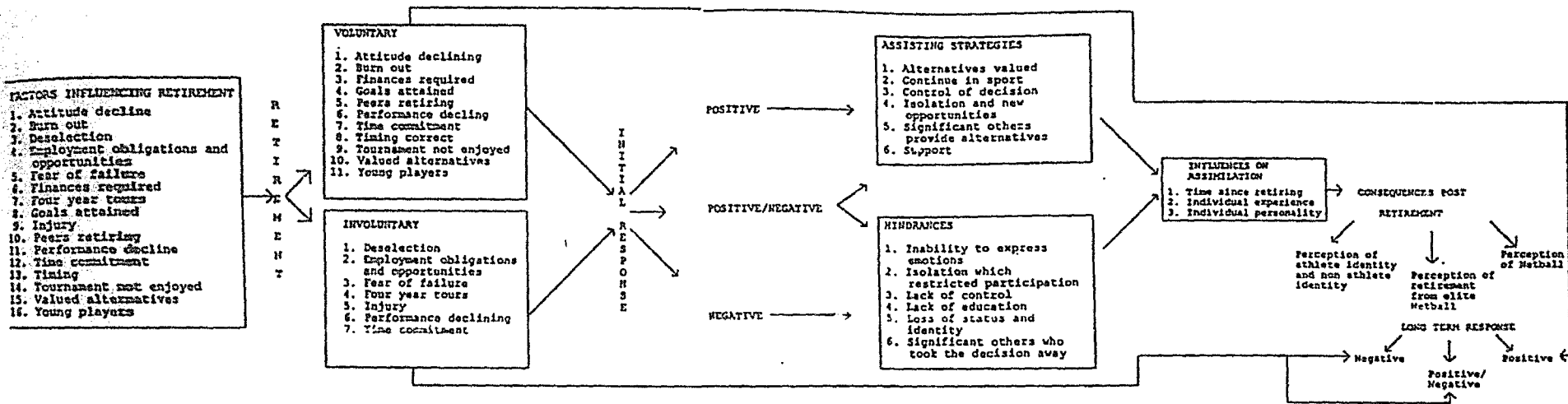


Figure 8. Conceptual Framework for Retirement from Elite Netball.

Successful/Unsuccessful Retirement

Clarification of the factors which determine a successful and unsuccessful retirement experience is considered necessary to guide the sport community and researchers in their understanding of retirement from sport. There is no definition of a successful or unsuccessful retirement experience, however, the results of this research demonstrate criteria which predicate a positive or negative response. These factors must, however, be offered with the caution that they need to be viewed as generally true but, due to the individual nature of the experience and response to retirement, not inevitable.

Determinants of Successful Retirement

The results from this study indicated the following characteristics most often lead the players to have positive reactions and responses to retirement from elite Netball and are therefore considered to be potential determinants of successful retirement.

1. Internal control
2. On time
3. Valued alternatives available
4. Achievement of sports goals
5. Ability to let the individual identity take precedence over the athlete identity.

Determinants of Unsuccessful Retirement

The results from this study indicated the following characteristics most often lead the players to have negative reactions and responses to retirement from elite

netball and are therefore considered to be potential determinants of unsuccessful retirement.

1. External control
2. Goals not achieved
3. Lack of sport organisation support
4. Inability to subordinate the athlete identity

Comparison of Female and Australian Netball Players to Other Athletes' Retirement Experiences

Female Experiences of Retirement

The results in this study have shown that the responses of these elite female netball players to retirement are not dissimilar to the male and female populations previously studied. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) in their study, which used a questionnaire to gather the data from 199 high performance male and female athletes, also reported a lack of gender related variability in the data. Allison and Meyer (1988), who interviewed professional female tennis players, found that the majority were pleased to leave, seeing it as an opportunity to participate in other activities which had been restricted by their presence on the elite tennis circuit. While some of the female netball players in this present study did retire to give time to valued alternatives, only one stated that it was a relief to retire. Time for alternatives was never, however, the only criteria for retirement for any of the players studied. Often the decision to leave was not made without difficulty and the majority of the former netball players

continued their involvement in netball to some degree. There were an almost equal number of players who did not leave by choice and they experienced many of the psychological and social traumas that their male counterparts experienced in transition out of elite sport such as loss of identity, grief, pain, resentment, and isolation.

Australian Experiences of Retirement

Although the nature of qualitative research does not embrace generalisations to the wider population, it appears when compared with reports in existing literature, that the experience of the elite Australian female netball player is similar to that of United States athletes who have been studied in previous research. The one exception to this is the duration of their elite sport participation. While most United States athletes are restricted to four years of college sport, the Australian netball players studied had elite careers ranging from six to 13 years. Australian netball players not being subject to the constraints of United States college athletes, which need the college as a base for training resources and selection, could have extended their careers even further had they chosen to continue and remained competitive at the elite level.

Work and Sport Retirement

Although there was no structured question regarding the players perceptions of work and sport retirement, direct comparison of the two events was made by two players who

had experienced both events and five other players offered some insight into their expectations of work retirement. The completely different perceptions of these two issues, held by the netball players are, perhaps, the most outstanding reasons why much of the literature on work retirement cannot be successfully applied to the study of sport retirement. For example Alice, who has experienced both types of retirement, when discussing planning and alternatives after work retirement said:

Retirement is something we planned and I had already got things in place to retire to. I didn't have the opportunity to do that in netball.

Rosemary's view of how retirement from work will be different than sport retirement is as follows:

I enjoy my home and I'm looking forward to retiring and seeing all the places that I haven't been. I have a companion to do it with and I'll be able to share and discuss things. It will probably be the first time in my life where, pray nothing happens, I will have control over exactly what we do and nothing is going to stop me.

There is a need to develop, within the netball community, a view of sport retirement similar to the view they have of work retirement. This is only possible if the sport association and the player work together to acknowledge the inevitability of retirement and prepare themselves for the changes this will make to them both. It is with this cooperation that both the athlete and the organisation fully use the resources that they have to make the future more positive for both of them.

Comparison of Types of Sport Withdrawal

In the process of conducting this research some understanding of the difference between the various types of sport withdrawal was made and the results of this are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Burn out.

From the results of the present study, it is evident that burn out is a factor which can influence an athlete to retire. Burn out was the reason that Nicole gave for retiring from elite netball, and for others, the time commitment required to be an elite netball player was part of their reason for retiring. This indication is supported by Dickinson (1976, p. 55) who, when discussing Olympic athletes, stated that, "if there are aversive associations with sport (the mammoth training schedules) these may be sufficient to terminate the behaviour altogether".

Drop out.

Drop out, although not discussed as a factor causing retirement by the former elite netball players was however, evident in the players post retirement sampling of other sports to increase their social circle and fulfil their need to play sport. When these sports did not suit their need for competence or their view of sport enjoyment they did withdraw, usually back to netball. Therefore, drop out is not considered to be related to retirement from sport until after the event has occurred.

Retirement.

Retirement from elite netball occurred when a player, voluntarily or otherwise, moved away from participation at

the previously preferred level. It did not necessarily mean total non-participation in netball as many of the players maintained participation at some lower level for a considerable time. Although coming back in netball is always an option in Australia, at the time the players retired they did not intend to return at that level. As Schlossberg (1984) suggested it is also necessary that the person, and in this case, the player, acknowledges a change for it to be said that the change has occurred. Only one player in the present study, Katherine, came back to elite netball after retiring. This was because she was persuaded by others to do so; however, coming back proved to be a negative experience for Katherine.

Sensitising Theory

As outlined in the literature review many theories have been adapted to explain sport retirement. It is necessary for the progress of study in this area that information gained from empirical studies is applied to each of the proposed theories to expand the knowledge and understanding of the application of the theories to sport retirement. The following discussion will attempt to achieve this by applying the data collected from this study against: (a) gerontological and thanantological theories; (b) The Sport Commitment Model (Scanlan et al. 1993); and (c) The Model of the Individual in Transition (Schlossberg, 1984).

Thanantological and Gerontological Theory

Stage Theory.

Kubler-Ross' (1969) stage theory, was found to have relevance to one of the players who experienced involuntary and unanticipated exit from elite Netball. The theory is based on dying individuals preparation for the inevitable ending of life, and therefore does not allow for the positive possibilities which can occur as a consequence of sport retirement. It is, therefore, limited in its application to the study of sport retirement.

Disengagement theory.

This theory makes two assumptions which restrict its usefulness: (a) that the sport structure and the athlete will mutually withdraw; and (b) that the successfully retired athlete will be the one who need not replace the lost role (Rosenberg, 1981). In the present study it was apparent, in many retirements, that the need to allow young players to advance was a consideration, however, only two of the players said that this was a factor which influenced the retirement decision. The other players only acknowledged awareness of the issue and, in their minds, it did not influence their decision. From these results, it could not be said that there was mutual withdrawal by the players and their administration, as the administration played no role in the players decisions. The sport structure is suspected by one player as having deselected her to allow younger players to advance but, again, this was not mutual withdrawal. The player concerned wanted to gain selection and remain. She did not want to sacrifice

her position for a younger player. Another player who is currently struggling with a second retirement decision which hinges around allowing young players to advance is experiencing conflict in her own mind about this decision. The sport is not playing a role in the decision making process but is standing by, waiting for her answer. Withdrawal to allow a younger player to advance is not an option a player who is enjoying participation in sport, would voluntarily choose. They would much rather have an alternative where both could play. As Rosenberg (1981, p. 121) stated, "this idea violates the competitiveness and achievement-based life philosophy which has brought the athlete status, prestige and success".

All players in this study needed to find other activities to replace elite netball. Those that valued their alternative roles were much better adjusted to retirement. For most of the former elite netball players the alternatives included playing netball at another level or maintaining involvement in an alternative role. From the results of the present study disengagement theory does not appear to apply to retirement from elite netball.

Activity theory.

This theory proved to have some relevance to the experiences of the former elite netball players, in that most players did substitute other activities, including lower level netball, for elite netball involvement. However, the area in which the theory has a limitation is that many players had difficulty in finding alternatives which they valued.

Subcultural theory.

This theory was not found to have relevance to the present study. While there is a strong subculture within netball, the former elite players did not suggest that retirement from netball was obscured by the Netball Association, a practice which Rosenberg (1981) suggested sport organisations are inclined towards. Although the players had not prepared for retirement they were aware of choices made by others to leave or stay, these were not obscured by the sport. There was no active counselling or advice to the players and they did not seek such advice. To netball and the players the view of retirement was hidden only insofar as they did not actively discuss its occurrence or consequences, it does not appear to have been a conscious decision by either party.

Continuity (consolidation) theory.

This theory, which suggests substitution for lost roles is not necessary, is rejected because it was found the players did need to have alternative activities to fill the gap in their lives after elite netball. Responses described previously of coming back, filling in, putting back and holding back also refute this theory and agree with Atchley's (1976) suggestion that consolidation:

may not be a satisfactory solution if the lost activity, was extremely important to the person's life and the remaining activities, though perhaps plentiful, are not to serve as the basis for a meaningful life. (p. 55)

Social breakdown theory.

This theory was not supported by the results of the present study. Although there was a role loss experienced by some of the players, most did remain involved in netball and did not allow their skills to atrophy thereby fulfilling external labels of lack of competence as is suggested by this theory. As the majority of players in the present study had a good education and/or career which they maintained after retirement there was again no reduction in competence.

Exchange theory.

The application of exchange theory had mixed consequences when applied to the present study. The players did exchange activities but not as a response to a reduction in power resources due to aging as suggested by this theory. It was more often as a response to the transition from single, carefree youth to adult with hopes of marriage, career and family, therefore this component of the theory was not supported. The theory however, does have relevance, as Rosenberg (1981) suggests, as a pre-retirement counselling technique to alert the players to the source of their power. The majority of players in the present study felt that they were seen as valuable to the netball administration only for their physical skills at the game or ability to fulfil coaching roles and that the administration of netball had little or no real personal interest in them. When they had left the sport they were neglected by the netball administration, there was no contact. This was particularly so for those who only

reached State level, as those who had made the Australian team had a limited amount of contact with the All Australian Netball Association to attend functions. This neglect continued until the players went back to help Netball either by coaching or by taking on administrative tasks. This again demonstrated to the players that the only interest that the administration has in them is for their netball skills and knowledge and their contribution to the game. There appears in their mind to be no interest by the administration in the person beyond the player. Exchange theory may also be able to be used to alert the administration to the need to have concern for the person behind the player, especially at the point when the need arises, in retirement from netball, for both the player and the administration to accept that the player is now placed behind the person.

The Sports Commitment Model (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons and Keeler, 1993)

A reduction in sport commitment was found to be a contributing factor influencing a player to retire. Extrapolating from the model offered by Scanlan et al. (1993) the player's perception of the positive elements in sport commitment were reduced when compared with their valued alternatives. In response to this change they chose retirement over continued involvement at the elite level of Netball, this is depicted in Figure 9.

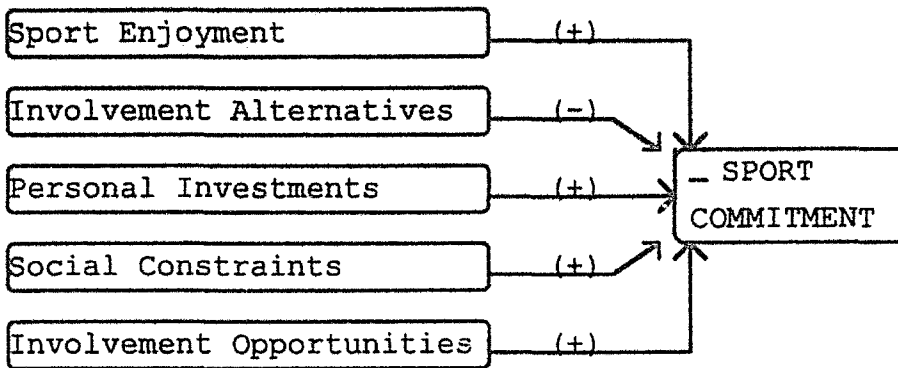


Figure 9. The Sport Commitment Model

Taken from The Sport Commitment Model by T.K. Scanlan and J.P. Simons, in Motivation in Sport and Exercise. G.C. Roberts (Ed.), 1992. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics. Cited in Scanlan et al., (1993).

This model also demonstrated a relevance in considering the responses of the deselected players. The four positive elements leading to greater sport commitment were changed by the deselection process as follows: (a) sport enjoyment at the elite level was reduced; (b) personal investments were reduced; and (c) social constraints and involvement opportunities at elite level were both removed. The negatively perceived involvement alternatives now became forced options. Thus, the former balance in favour of sport commitment was reversed, predisposing the players to retire.

Although the Sport Commitment Model explains the reasons for decisions made by the players who experience both positive and negative experiences to retirement from elite netball, it does not attempt to understand what impact the decision will have on each individual player or how the player will cope with the transition.

Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition provides a more comprehensive framework for studying the complete process involved. How the model achieves this and a proposed change to the model which would make it more sport specific is made in the following paragraphs.

Schlossberg (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition

Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition, which is more flexible than other models adapted to sport retirement and allows for individual experience, has been shown to have greater relevance, providing a clear framework from which the study of sport retirement for all athletes can progress.

Although caution must be applied when considering retirement in sport generally, the results of this study do offer support for Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition and suggest an extension to the model which is considered to be of value.

The framework Schlossberg (1984) proposed has three components: (a) the transition which is viewed in terms of its type, context and impact; (b) coping resources which are characterised by the particular transition, the individual and the environment; and (c) the transition process which is examined in relation to the ways the individual reacts to and appraises the situation over time. This framework was shown to have relevance in the present study as the player's reactions to the transition were affected by the three components outlined by Schlossberg.

The change to the Model which is proposed emanates from the data base and reconciles empirical findings with theoretical concepts. It was apparent from the data that the existence of an athlete identity remained with the player after retirement and this appears to be a main contributing factor which either disrupts or assists a player in the transition from sport. The balance which determines the response by the player appears to depend on: (a) the ego development of the athlete identity; (b) the value or importance placed on this athlete identity; and (c) the socialisation into and out of the sport.

The creation of identity, within the bounds of a sport, provides the player with an occupation which keeps them busy and provides them with self esteem. It also allows others to regulate their life and channel their skills to maintain elite performances. In the pursuit of elite performance they are often shielded from normal life developmental experiences which would be useful after retirement (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990; Werthner and Orlick, 1986).

Brewer, Van Raalte and Linder (1993) in reviewing the existing literature on sport retirement found that there may be both positive and negative consequences associated with strong athletic identity. Benefits cited were: (a) the development of a salient identity; (b) a positive effect on athletic performance; and (c) health and fitness. Potential risks cited were: (a) difficulty with career transition; (b) vulnerability to emotional difficulties; and (c) it may prompt some athletes to engage in sport or

exercise to the extent that their physical health is jeopardised.

While Schlossberg's (1984) detailed model of the individual in transition (refer Appendix J) does have a psychological resource of ego development, this does not fully explain the players position. Agreement with Ogilvie and Taylor's (1993b) description that an athlete is a "unidimensional" person requires a change to Schlossberg's Model in order to study this phenomenon in more detail. If the sports person has more than one identity impinging on them, and it is suggested that they do, the response they will have to any issue which affects them will be determined by multiple identities. In this case, it is proposed that the model be adapted to include the athlete identity in the centre of the model as shown in Figure 10.

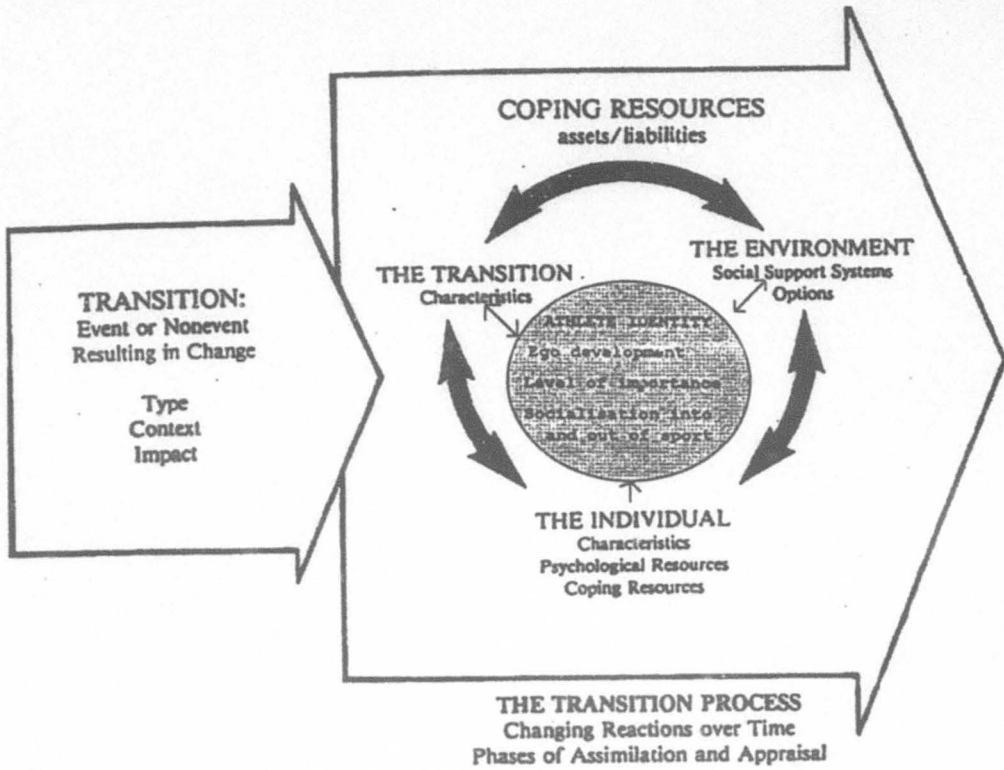


Figure 10. Proposed Change to Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition

Note: Taken from Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Theory with Practice, By N.K. Schlossberg, 1984, New York: Springer.

By placing the athlete identity in the centre of the model it depicts the ability of this identity to permeate all the events which affect the individual and, therefore, their reactions and responses to any given situation. Knowledge of this athlete identity is central to understanding the individual sportsperson's decision to retire as well as the response, both initial and long term, to the transition out of elite sport.

This proposed change may provide the synthesis of the ideas proposed in three research papers: (a) McPherson (1984) who proposed a life cycle perspective may be useful; (b) Ogilvie and Taylor's (1993b) acknowledgment that sport participation and development are not mutually exclusive; and (c) Allison and Meyer's (1988) suggestion that the views of athletes still playing would be useful to link the process of retirement to understanding the nature of the experience during the competitive years. This is possible as a study using this adapted model could: (a) assess the development of the athletic life cycle; (b) encompass all the participation and development of the athlete within a sport; and (c) provide the views, throughout the sport development, of the athlete.

Strategies for Prevention/Intervention Programs

Nine issues emerged during this study as important factors to consider when constructing a netball specific prevention/intervention program. Each of these is now discussed.

1. Continued Provision of Opportunities to Remain Involved in Netball

Continued involvement in netball has been a positive component of many of the former netball players transition from elite netball. Not only has this assisted the players, it has also provided valuable resources to the netball community. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) also recommend that this type of expertise is invaluable and that sports organisations should actively seek out former players to assist in coaching and for other roles that would benefit from the player's experience. The need to keep players informed of opportunities for continued involvement is vital to both netball and its players.

2. Encourage Continued Contact with Retired Players

One of the most highly valued issues for the majority of the former players was contact with their netball peers and the game. Many of the players had kept in touch with each other over a long period of time, however, most were disappointed in the lack of contact they had from the Western Australian Netball Association after their retirement from elite netball. This situation often left the players feeling that they were not valued by the Netball Association beyond their expertise as a player.

The Netball Association cannot continue to expect former players to fulfil other roles within their organisation without supporting the individual. It is no longer acceptable, if it ever was, to look after a player only while they are actively playing and then forget them because they have been replaced by others. There is an

obligation to support the former player if this is required. If there is no contact by the Netball Association how can they assess the need for support.

The need for support by the sports organisation has been found in other empirical studies and was an issue of importance to many of the players in this study. It was also evident that the players feel it is netball administration's role to offer the support and not the individual players role to seek assistance. The provision of a confidential support service which includes a sports psychologist or similar counselling service, and is known, by all netball players, to be available and an individual within the administration of netball who can be contacted by the players to seek assistance would help to alleviate this problem. By creating and building awareness of support systems within netball the players will feel able to seek assistance without embarrassment.

3. Alternatives For Ego Investment

The value of alternatives available to the former players has been shown to have impact on their response to retirement. From these it is evident that they are better equipped to cope with the transition out of elite netball if they have some alternative available to turn to after retirement in which they have invested sufficient ego. The programs should encourage the players to participate in other activities as part of a plan towards retirement so that they are not left without valued alternatives.

4. Increase the Use of Cross-training Techniques

One of the most consistent hindrances to the former netball players retirement was the lack of competence and exposure to other sports. Cross-training techniques would provide three specific benefits: (a) encourage participation in alternative sports which would increase competence and options for sport after retirement; (b) it could help prevent burn out as it was experienced by a player in this study; and (c) help avoid monotony by increasing the variety of techniques used to achieve skills and strength during training.

The use of cross-training is supported by Bompa (1990) who suggests that by incorporating these techniques the coach can achieve the following results for the players:

One could easily enrich the content of his training, bringing into it greater variety, which in the end will reflect positively upon his mental and psychological well being. (p. 39)

5. Individual Needs and Skills Must be Identified

When creating the various components of an intervention/prevention program a flexible approach must be maintained so that each service offered allows for the skill and needs of each individual. As was evident in the present research, when two players began to coach after retiring from elite sport they had very different reactions to the experience. Therefore, while transferring skills is important, encouraging everyone in the same direction may lead to disaster. Each person's strengths and weaknesses must be addressed and utilised to best advantage.

6. Acknowledgment of Former Players Contribution to Netball

One of the issues which was raised by the former players when discussing their post retirement reactions was the lack of recognition and acknowledgment that they received from the Netball Association. The players felt that more recognition could be given by: (a) placing photographs of former representative teams at the WANA headquarters as this would also provide a link with the greater netball community for young players in particular; (b) the demonstration by the administration of greater understanding of the effort that making a representative team requires in netball. The players perceive that netball's administration assume that players going to a National or International event have a holiday. The facts, as the former players see them, are that they had to place a lot of personal resources of time and energy into training, coaching and umpiring before they went to represent a team. Then they were expected to put forward their best on court performances while they were away. For many, the National tournaments meant financial hardship, particularly for those who lost wages while away at the event; and (c) at present Life Membership cannot be given to a player or former player because the existing rules on eligibility restrict their inclusion. This omission, the former players believe, epitomises the lack of acknowledgment of their contribution to netball.

These issues are not difficult for netball to redress and it appears that this would help to remove a fundamental barrier between the players and the administration. Co-

operation and greater understanding of the role of each group, administration and player, would be beneficial to both.

7. Creation of a Former Players Association

Although it was evident that this has been tried before, the need for such an organisation is still apparent and would be of particular value to the players at the time of their retirement. One player suggested that within this network a mentor system could be developed so that former players with specific knowledge and skills could be linked with both current and former players who need particular assistance.

As the former players related during the study, there is a bond which links all netball players and this should be put to better use, particularly in respect to helping each other in the transition out of netball. This network should be, at least, supported by the WANA as its greatest benefit, long term, will be to netball.

8. Support for Significant Others

The impact of an elite player retiring from netball did not just affect the player, it affected other significant people. The needs of these other people in providing support for the players is considerable yet no mention has been made of providing information to help them assist the player effectively to make a positive transition out of the sport. A booklet or pamphlet that: (a) creates awareness of the type of reaction they may encounter from the players; (b) lists the actions they may take which have been found to assist players in transition; (c) when it

would be appropriate to seek assistance; and (d) contact details for services which may be helpful, would be invaluable.

The support role is one which has been found to be vital to positive transition, although, it is commonly left to people with no training in this field and no comprehension of the players past or present emotional experience. It is therefore important that the information which will help them to provide that support is given to them in order to avoid the risk of trauma due to nonexistent support at a time when the players need it most.

9. Educate the Players to View Netball Retirement More Positively

In common with the community, players have a positive view of work retirement, seeing it as a freedom from daily routine and a reward for past work. Retirement from netball, by comparison, was often seen as inability to continue to be competitive, aging and the end of rewards.

These views need to be modified so that players recognise that, although retirement from netball is inevitable, there is great benefit to be derived from commitment to play for a short period together with careful planning for the retirement period which will provide other challenges and other rewards. The importance of players seeking advice is paramount to change these views. This will help the player be aware of their individual options and the best method for them to deal with the transition. Until this modification is effected, there will continue to

be players who lack the preparation and personal or external strategies and, as a result, will suffer negative retirement experiences.

10. Change the Under-age Competition Rules

As suggested in the findings chapter, if the current lack of skilled young players to fill the vacancies on the under-age competitions were rectified many of the concerns for the fate of young players would be reduced. This could be achieved by amending the existing rules to allow a player to compete in only one under-age event each year.

Recommendation for Future Research

This research has shown that former elite female Netball players in Western Australia respond to sport retirement in a similar manner to other female and male athletes who have been studied. It is, however, necessary for further studies utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods to be conducted to confirm that this is the case for other Australian athletes.

It is important that the terms used, for example elite, involuntary, voluntary and retirement, are clearly defined in the context of retirement from sport. This will ensure uniformity and accurate comparison of findings when seeking to extend understanding of the topic.

Allison and Meyer (1988) suggested that there were different reactions by the female tennis players to retirement. Similarly, a study of the retirement response of the Australian female tennis player would be of value for comparison with the results found by Allison and Meyer.

Studies which utilise the change to Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition proposed by this research which will consider the influence of the athlete identity on socialisation into and out of sport, including the time when the player experiences retirement, will be valuable in furthering this understanding.

A longitudinal study which assesses the importance to athletes of their "athlete identity" at the various stages of the sports career would provide a better understanding of the athlete's perceptions.

Cross cultural studies of netball and other sports with countries such as New Zealand our nearest neighbour and rival would be of value.

Final Comments

This study supports the notion that the sport retirement experience is individual in nature and the athlete's responses have common elements. The experiences of the former elite female netball player were comparable with the experience of other athletes studied to date. The exception to this was the length of playing career which the Australian sport system allows. This has provided the players with the opportunity to: (a) have a longer playing career in netball than the careers of other athletes which have been studied; and (b) remain in netball in some other capacity after retirement if they chose to do so. Both of these factors have been of positive value to most of the players. The existence of these opportunities has also seen the emergence of the phenomenon of (a) coming back;

(b) filling in; (c) putting back; and (d) holding back. These opportunities have generally been positive in value for the player and have been of great value to the netball community in general.

As with all life events sport is not stagnant. The historical changes within netball and in Australian society have had an impact on the players studied. Sometimes this was a positive influence, at other times negative. The way in which the players have dealt with those changes has influenced their reactions and response to their retirement.

In the past, the reactions by players have been accepted as part of sport 'life'. This has been the case in netball where a "grateful acceptance" of things beyond the players' control was considered good manners, and a few of the players have paid highly for this attitude. It is now acknowledged that a caring society will not allow this attitude to prevail in sport or elsewhere. The responsibility that all sections of the community have to the individual's health and well being have been established as important in today's society. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the Netball association, and other sports organisations, to respond to the moral values in society, as positively as they have responded to technological and historical changes which have affected their game, and put into place services and facilities that will help to care for the whole person, not just the player.

It is of particular importance that the administration of every sports organisation be aware of the devastating effects that deselection can cause and that they seek to assist players in understanding the decision and the alternatives which are available to them. This is an area in which the employers of most Australians are more advanced in their thinking. When redundancies are necessary some education and discussion of alternatives is approached under the heading of "out placement counselling".

As sport becomes "work" and the results of these actions affect the livelihood of the players, this debrief and guidance will become an essential element for all sports. Those who prepare now will benefit their members and their organisation as a whole and, perhaps, avoid costly litigation in the future.

Just as the sports organisations must care for the whole player, the study of sport retirement must consider the whole player. If either fail, future athletes and sport will be disadvantaged over the long term. The importance the players place on sport is not comparable, for the majority, with any other event in their life. As Rosemary stated:

I suppose you think of yourself as an athlete all your life. In your mind you know you were special once.

For this reason players are vulnerable when they need to retire and it is in everyone's interest to assist them in this transition in any way possible.

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APPENDIX A

Quantitative Research Methods And Findings To Date

Reference	Method and sample	Findings
Mihovilovic (1968)	Questionnaire 44 males Age 25-46	Painful if no alternatives Circle of friends diminished
Vouille (1978)	Questionnaire 1972-73; 1975 451 males Age 17-31 Olympic Games and football and baseball players	Active career longer Positive reactions Team athletes have longer careers
Dubois (1980)	Questionnaire 160 male athletes 450 Male non/ath baseball	Athletic status showed no significant effect to occupational prestige
Reynolds (1981)	Questionnaire 596 males Football Average career 5.7 years	Fame and time not related linearly with self esteem
Lerch (1981)	Questionnaire 511 males	Many diverse variables to high life satisfaction
Rosenberg (1981)	Survey 102 males 21 baseball teams	Teams don't care about former players
Greendorfer & Blinde (1985)	Questionnaire 427 males 697 females college athletes	High percentage athletes missed sport
Curtis & Ennis (1988)	Survey 109 Junior hockey	Positive response Life satisfaction high
Allison & Meyer (1988)	Questionnaire 20 females Professional tennis players	Opportunity to do other activities

Koukouris (1991)	Questionnaire 113 athletes various sports Age 18-23	Primary factor financial and time commitment
Sinclair & Orlick (1993)	Questionnaire Likert Scale 99 male 100 female 31 sports	Smooth transition if achieved goals Difference related to competence

APPENDIX B
Qualitative Research Methods and Findings To Date

Reference	Method and sample	Findings
Semyonov (1984)	Interviews Rating scales 205males	Education, occupation and. socio-economic variables African/Asian Jews behind
Werthner & Orlick (1986)	Elite athletes ret. interview schedule 14 males 14 females Canadian Olympic Games athletes	Very individual dealing with transition
Swain (1991)	Interviews Age 26-46 10 athletes various sports	Progressive over time Internal and external pressure to change career
Kleiber & Brock (1992)	Interviews Rosenberg Esteem Scale 52 injured 371 not injured college athletes	Career ending injury related to low life satisfaction
Blinde & Stratta (1992)	Interviews 2 male 18 female Hockey and gym	Death analogy traumatic

APPENDIX C

Factors Influencing Athletic Responses to Retirement

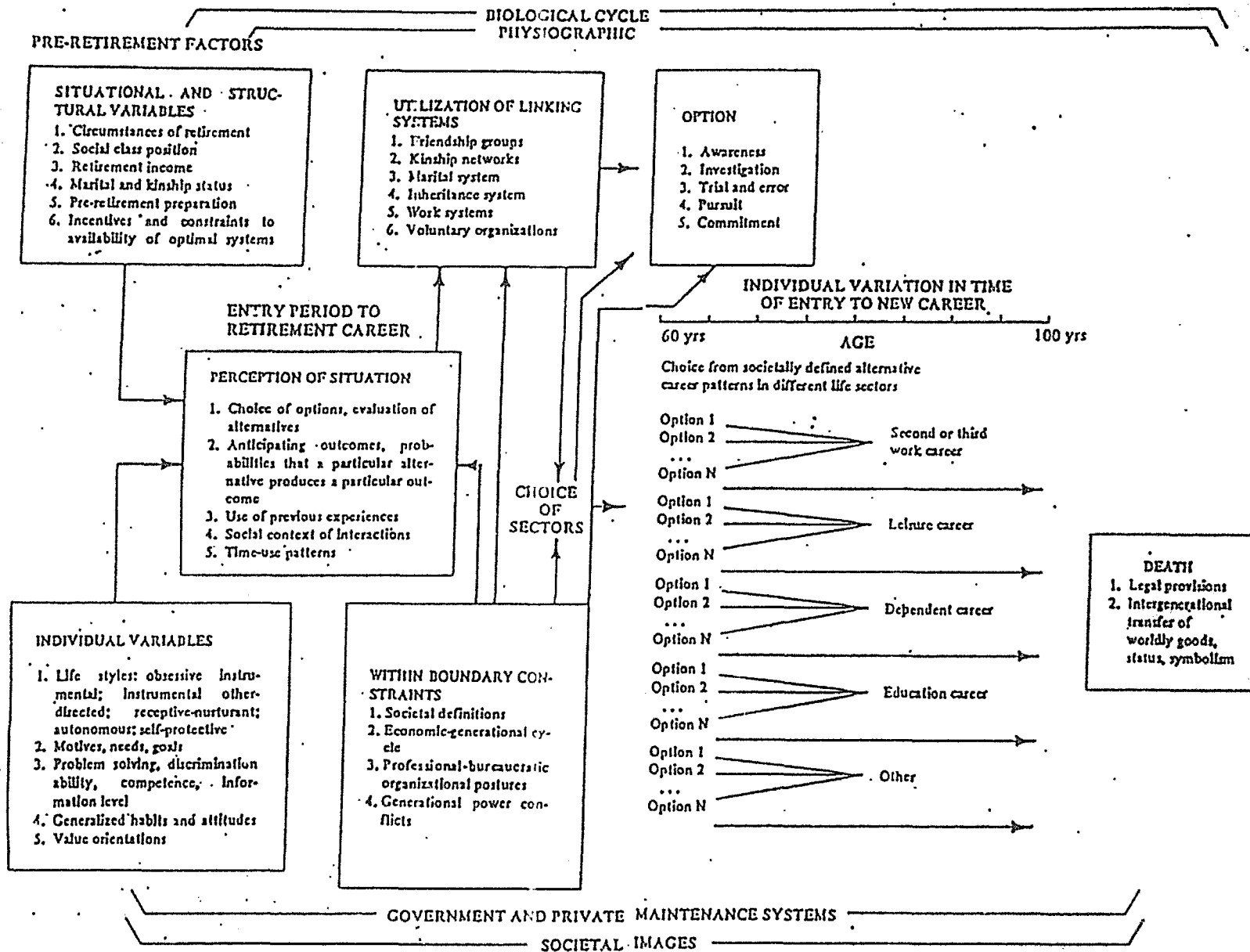
Factors	Reference
Controlled by the athlete	
Perceived level of control	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Desire to remain in the game	McPherson (1978)
Shielded from responsibility	Pearson & Petitpas (1990)
Socio/economic/ minority status	Hill & Lowe (1974)
Believed entitled to care	Pearson & Petitpas (1990)
Character of the individual	Pearson & Petitpas (1990)
Personal management skills	Crook & Robertson (1991)
Social behaviour repertoire	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Development of life skills	Pearson & Petitpas (1990)
Commitment	Baillie & Danish (1992)
Denial	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Age	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Narrow focus	Pearson & Petitpas (1990)
Label athlete	Baillie & Danish (1992)
Coping skills	Baillie & Danish (1992)
Self esteem	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Determined by sport and others	
Politics/problems within the sport	Werthner & Orlick (1986)
Structure/system of the sport	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Socialisation into sport/ego development	Swain (1991)
Career counselling	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Media attention	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993a)
Marital status	Curtis & Ennis (1988)
Support	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Preparation	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Coaching	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Characteristics	
Voluntary or involuntary	Greendorfer & Blinde (1985)
Gradual/Sudden onset	Gorbett (1985)
Concurrent stress	Swain (1991)
Decreased status	Rosenberg (1980)
Timing	Pearson & Petitpas (1990)
Deselection	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Miscellaneous	
Education/training level	Rosenberg (1980)
Alternatives available & valued	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Geographic relocation	Ogilvie & Taylor (1993b)
Skill transfer	Hill & Lowe (1974)
Identity crisis	Pearson & Petitpas (1990)
Financial problems	Werthner & Orlick (1986)
Health/injuries	Pearson & Petitpas (1990)
Resocialisation	Crook & Robertson (1991)

APPENDIX D

The Similarities Between Sport and Work Retirement

Experience	Reference
Characteristic	
Central involvement in life	Ogilvie and Howe (1982)
Sense of self worth based competence in environment	McPherson (1993)
Cause	
Taken over by age or injury	Hill & Lowe (1974)
Preparation	
Need for specially designed training programs	Gorbett (1985)
Result	
Positive or negative consequences	Rosenberg (1981)
Major stress point	Hill & Lowe (1974)
Require desocialisation	Crook & Robertson (1991)
Lack of retraining available	Rosenberg (1981)
Identify with former occupation	Crook & Robertson (1991)

Sussman's (1972) Analytical Model for the Sociological Analysis of Retirement



APPENDIX G

Letter of Disclosure

Dear _____

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study into the Retirement Experiences of Former Elite Female Netball Players.

The purpose of the research is to provide an Australian and female perspective on sport retirement taking into account the factors contributing to the decision to retire, the process of retirement, and post-retirement consequences. The results of the research will be used to develop strategies which can be used in the future by players, coaches and Netball Associations.

To gather the information three interviews at a location and time suitable to you will be necessary. The first interview of one half hour duration will be used to collect demographic data (eg. age, Netball history) The second interview which will be of one and a half hours will discuss your retirement from sport experiences. The third interview will clarify any matters discussed previously and provide time to add any further comments you may have on the interview questions.

With your consent, each interview will be audiotaped to ensure accuracy of the data. These tapes will remain confidential and will be stored in a locked cabinet.

Codes will be used to identify participants to ensure confidentiality, for example:- Athlete 1 said..... These codes will also be used should the findings of the research be published.

Your participation in the project is by choice, should you decide to participate you may also choose to withdraw at any time during the study.

As discussing this subject may be emotionally distressing for some participants a counselling service has been arranged for the use of any participant and the charges will be recoverable through the Medicare system.

Discussing your sport retirement experiences affords to you the opportunity to clarify your own perceptions of this experience and will help us to develop intervention and prevention programs to assist other athletes in their transition from sport.

Enclosed is a form for you to sign and return to the above address by Friday 29 April, 1994, should you agree to participate in this study. Upon receipt of the form I will contact you regarding the first interview.

Should you have any further questions regarding this study please do not hesitate to contact me on 3006926 or Dr Lynn Embrey on 4055565 during office hours.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Janice Redmond
Masters Of Applied Science
(Sports Science) Student
Edith Cowan University Joondalup.

Codes will be used to identify participants to ensure confidentiality, for example:- Athlete 1 said..... These codes will also be used should the findings of the research be published.

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Yours faithfully

Mrs Janice Redmond
Masters Of Applied Science
(Sports Science) Student
Edith Cowan University Joondalup.

EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

JOONDALUP CAMPUS

Form of Disclosure and Informed Consent

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to provide an Australian and female perspective on sport retirement taking into account the factors contributing to the decision to retire, the process of retirement, and post-retirement consequences. The results will then be used to develop strategies which can be used in the future by players, coaches and Netball Associations.

Length of Study

The study will be conducted over a 3 month period during which time the researcher will interview on a one-to-one basis each participant.

Procedures

An initial telephone contact with the participants will be made to introduce the researcher and the study, a formal letter will be follow to obtain written consent from the participant. A confirming telephone call will be made prior to each of the three interviews, which will be held at a time and place suitable to the participant and for the purpose of the study. With the consent of the participants each interview will be audiotaped and transcribed to ensure accuracy. The participants will be given access to each

transcript to review prior to any information being used in the study.

Benefits to the Participants

The potential benefit to the participant will be to clarify their own perceptions of their retirement experiences.

Little is known about the Australian female athlete regarding their retirement experiences and this study will increase this knowledge and assist in the development of intervention and prevention programs for Australian Netball players.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE DATA

Reporting

The participants will be assured that their identities will be protected through the use of pseudonyms and that any quotes used from the transcripts will employ these pseudonyms.

Storage

The tapes and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet for a two year period, after which time the tapes will be erased. The transcripts will be kept for further analysis and future research.

Any questions concerning the project entitled, The Retirement Experiences of Former Elite Female Netball Players can be directed to:

Janice Redmond (Principal Investigator)
Human Movement Department
Edith Cowan University
Joondalup Campus on 4055565

I have read the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising I may withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided my name is not used.

.....
Participant's signature	Date
.....
Investigator's signature	Date
.....
Research Supervisor	Date

Any further queries can be directed to:
Dr Lynn Embrey
Research Supervisor
Department of Human Movement
Edith Cowan University
Joondalup Campus
Ph: 405 5565

Note: Dr Embrey will be on Long Service Leave from 15 April 1994 until 30 June 1994. In her absence, any queries regarding this study should be directed to:
Professor Anne McMurray
Department of Nursing
Edith Cowan University
Churchlands Campus
Ph: 3838594

APPENDIX H

Interview Guide - Interview 2

1. Would you please tell me what retiring from elite Netball was like for you?
2. What factors influenced your decision to retire?
3. What preparation did you have for life without elite level Netball?
4. Can you tell me about the significant people in your life at the time of your retirement and what influence, if any, they had on your decision to retire?
5. Looking back, what do you think about your decision to retire?
6. What factors did you find helped you in the transition out of elite level Netball?
7. What factors did you find hindered your adjustment out of elite level Netball?
8. Do you still identify with yourself as an athlete? Do others?
9. Do you have any advice on coping with transition out of elite Netball for players who will be retiring in the future?
10. What is your perception of Netball now that you have retired from elite play?

APPENDIX I

Example of Data Analysis

Difficult because you so busy with it to actually find something to fill that ^{gap} and plus your ^I somebody particularly going from playing that to being just a Mum you've lost an ^I identity and that got probably harder not the first year of retiring but the second year because people then had forgotten you the first retirement year was still just well I was out with a baby so it was sort of an easy ^p reason but then people, ^{YP} young one's don't know who you are and you sort of think feel a little bit well who ^I am I you start questioning yourself well who am I, I'm just another person I never really .. (yeh whereas what when you retired the first time people still recognised you?) Yeh I felt more recognised I don't know whether that was just my perception I felt that more people still knew who ^I was maybe because I was around the courts a lot more and I never, I did a lot more ^{coaching} with only the one child as well when she was a baby she used to come with me as a little baby whereas with the second one having two I didn't make it until late to watch games so it became a bit lost things happen which you didn't know about (a lot of the people that were then when you retired the first time would have still been the people you actually played with?) yes (even a couple of years down track it would have changed) yes that's right (and taking small children to netball is difficult to, outdoor) fortunately I did all that when I was playing State League which was indoors Friday nights and my ^{so} husband would bring the kids so it wasn't so bad.

^{so} Q2 Family plus knowing I was ^{comp} never going to get any better if I could still see that I could be an Australian player because I have never been Australian representative if that was still in if I knew that was still within my grasp I may not have retired but I knew that ^T time had passed and I wasn't at my best ^{PD} made the decision easier I had gone as far up the ^{CA} ladder as I could go and I was happy with that.

things with the children^{SO} husband (can you imagine going out and not having a family?)
 No I don't think so say I didn't have the children I wasn't able to fall^P pregnant and have
 them I'd have to still be playing as high as I could get to. In a way it almost became the^P
 easy way out for me to actually have the baby and I can't^{CB} play because it was the only
 way I could see that I would not be talked into doing it if I'm pregnant I can't play can I.
 (A few people had said that) (Did anyone ever talk to you about what you were going
 to do when you stopped playing netball?) Not really because when I was playing I was
 also coaching^{Co} so I had already gone into another area and I always thought that when I^{TS}
 leave playing I'll get more into the coaching^{Co} side and change the weighting of it I^{PREP}
 suppose which I did to an extent I did more coaching^{Co} but it never really was the same
 commitment wasn't the same the time was pit in but not the other things you didn't have
 to worry about how much sleep you had what your diet was and all those other things
 you used to think about everyday (a mental thing but not so much a physical thing) yeh
 and it was, I hated it sorting out all these people who was going to play and who wasn't^{Co TS}
 going to play and how well they were training it was like a (especially when you think
 you've made the right decision and people say why aren't I in it) that's right.

Q 4 Well after the first one, one of my^{SO} coaches really talked me back into coming back^{CB}
 after I had two children she had I think I don't know she needed me and it was more for^N
 her than me that I came back and played I did it because I was talked into it I enjoyed it^{CB}
 but I think looking back it wasn't the brightest of moves I didn't gain anything from^{LB}
 doing it but there was no real gain for her there was probably more in that she needed (a
 good player) not just a player but probably I was older, maturity and I filled that gap and
 she talked me into it but I had just recently saw a game on tele the Australian team on^{SO}
 tele that inspired me a bit I though I'm not that good but I can still play pretty good if I^M
 put my heart and sole into it for another year (maybe you got a bit of competence
 knowledge) yeh it was still there after two children. (Anybody else) No I decided that^{Comp IC}

APPENDIX J

Schlossberg's (1984) Detailed Look at the
Individual in Transition

THE TRANSITION event or nonevent resulting in change	COPING RESOURCES Balance of assets and liabilities			THE TRANSITION PROCESS Reactions over time for better or for worse
<p>TYPE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated • Unanticipated • Nonevent • Chronic hassle <p>CONTEXT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship of person to transition • Setting in which transition occurs <p>IMPACT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Routines • Assumptions • Roles 	<p>VARIABLES CHARACTERIZING THE TRANSITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Event or nonevent characteristics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Trigger -Timing -Source -Role change -Duration -Previous experience with a similar transition -Concurrent stress • <i>Assessment</i> 	<p>VARIABLES CHARACTERIZING THE INDIVIDUAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and demographic characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Socioeconomic status -Sex role -Age and stage of life -State of health • Psychological resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ego development -Personality -Outlook -Commitments and values • Coping responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Functions: Controlling situation, meaning, or stress -Strategies: Information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, intrapsychic behavior 	<p>VARIABLES CHARACTERIZING THE ENVIRONMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Types: intimate, family unit, friendship network, institution -Functions: affect, affirmation, aid, feedback -Measurement: convoy • Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Actual -Perceived -Utilized -Created 	<p>PHASES OF ASSIMILATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pervasiveness • Disruptions • Integration, for better or for worse <p>APPRAISAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of transition, resources, results • Of preoccupation vs. life satisfaction

Figure 5. Schlossberg's (1984) Model of the Individual in Transition.

Note: Taken from Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Theory with Practice, By N.K. Schlossberg, 1984, New York: Springer.