Life After Hockey: An Examination of Athletic Career Transition and the National Hockey League's Career Transition Program

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Dedication

To all those who have played in the NHL.

Abstract

The existent body of athletic career retirement literature is scant in studies of career transition programs. In an effort to attend to this analytical gap, the present study set out to examine the transitions of National Hockey League (NHL; ice hockey) alumni, as well as the effect and effectiveness of their respective career transition program, the Life After Hockey program. Interviews with 17 NHL/program alumni revealed that quality of transition (to post-playing life) was affected by: the continuity between pre- and post-retirement environments; athletic identity; physical/psychological health (particularly with respect to post-concussion syndrome); selective coping strategies (e.g., pre-retirement planning (e.g., financial planning, continued education), positive reinterpretation, alcohol/substance abuse); and social support. Also affecting quality of transition, and found to be highly effective (particularly in generating new occupational opportunities, assisting in the acquisition of new skills, and providing a system of continuous support), was the Life After Hockey program.

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Chapter One - Introduction

Reflecting upon his experiences as a professional athlete in the National Hockey League (NHL; North American men's professional ice hockey), Hall of Fame defenseman Bill Gadsby once remarked "everything would be fine if the good Lord had given guys like me the capability to play hockey until we were sixty-five. Then we wouldn't need to start life over at forty" (Wilkins, Howe, & Howe, 2000, p.1). Retirement and feelings of 'starting over' are experienced by several former NHL players. For these individuals, the end of a career typically marks a significant period of change, and involves transitioning away from activities which previously required a great commitment of time, energy, and role identification (Baillie & Danish, 1992).

Schlossberg (1981) contended that a transition occurs "if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (p. 5). Moos and Tsu (1976) added that transitions, such as those faced by professional athletes at retirement, have the potential to result in either personal growth or self-deterioration. Research on the subject of athletic career transitions has provided support for these divergent portrayals.

Early accounts of athletic career transition, for example, predominantly portrayed the process as being inherently negative and involving significant psychological, physical, and/or social adjustment issues (cf. Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Haerle, 1975; Hill & Lowe, 1974; Lerch, 1981; Mihovilovic, 1968; Rosenberg, 1984; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Examples of the particular issues experienced by athletes included: a decrease in self-esteem, a loss of identity, feelings of unaccomplished athletic goals, and varying forms of substance abuse. Countering such dramatic and

negative conceptualizations, however, were several other works, including those of Coakley (1983), Greendorfer and Blinde (1985), and Allison and Meyer (1988). More recent research endeavours have also found that while some retired athletes struggle in their transition to a post-playing life, others have few, if any, complications (Lavallee, Nesti, Borkoles, Cockerill, & Edge, 2000).[1] Research pertaining to former professional hockey players is reflective of this latter position.

One of the earliest investigations into to the athletic career transitions of NHL players was provided by Baillie (1992), who found that of 260 former athletes (77 of whom were former NHL players), some 50% had experienced difficulty transitioning to a post-playing life. More recently, Chambers (2002), in a study that included 81 former professional hockey players, found that of the total sample: 12.5% experienced considerable difficulty with emotional adjustment, 5.1% expressed problems related to functional adjustment, and 12.6% expressed depressive symptoms. The findings of Chambers' (2002) study suggest that although transition was not difficult for the majority of retired professional hockey players, issues may and have occurred.

The types of transition-related difficulties experienced by athletes may generally be categorized into one of five groups: psychological (e.g., feelings of underachievement in sport-related goals, fear of an uncertain future, feelings of incompetence in activities other than sport, lack of self-confidence, low self-worth, low self-esteem), social (psychosocial) (e.g., missing sport-related social activities, missing friends from the sport environment, difficulties in establishing social contacts, relationship difficulties with

[1] In synthesizing the results of 14 studies, Lavallee et al. (2000) found that 20.1% (n=535/2665) of surveyed athletes "required considerable career transition adjustment" (p. 112).

one's partner), occupational (e.g., lack of professional knowledge, financial difficulties, problems with finding a job, difficulties with adjustment to the requirements of the occupation), organizational (e.g., negative evaluation of coping with adaptation to post-playing life, low satisfaction with post-playing life), and physical (psychophysical) (e.g., weight gain, poorly perceived physical condition) (Cecic Erpic, Wylleman, & Zupancic, 2004; Drahota & Eitzen, 1998; Gorbett, 1985; Stephan & Bilard, 2003; Stephan, Torregrosa, & Sanchez, 2007; Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998). Given the multitude of potential difficulties, it should not be surprising that some athletes struggle with the transition to a post-playing life. For those athletes who are independently incapable of overcoming these difficulties, a variety of interventions are available.

Among these interventions are such therapeutic remedies as: cognitive restructuring, stress management/emotional expression, account-making, and counseling (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004). Building upon traditional therapeutic measures, a number of athletic career transition programs have also been developed (Anderson & Morris, 2000). These programs are managed primarily by national sport governing bodies, National Olympic Committees, sport-specific federations, academic institutions, and independent organizations linked to sport (Anderson & Morris, 2000). The programs vary in format, but generally allow for participants to learn about: personal management skills (e.g., academic, financial planning, coping), vocational and professional occupations, managing social relationships, balancing one's lifestyle, and other aspects relevant to career termination (Anderson & Morris, 2000; North & Lavallee, 2004; Petitpas, Danish, McKelvain, & Murphy, 1992). One pertinent example of such a program is that of the NHL's, named the Life After Hockey program.

Operated out of Quinnipiac University (located in Hamden, Connecticut), the Life After Hockey program has offered communication-, business-, education-, and transition-related services to members of the NHL Players' Association (NHLPA) and NHL Alumni Association. Supported by these groups, the program has been in operation for eight years and has assisted some 100 players (current or former) over that time. The program, much like other athletic career transition programs, also presented a unique opportunity for research.

The reason for this was that the existent body of athletic career retirement literature was laden with studies regarding athletes and the process by which they transitioned from either professional (e.g., Allison & Meyer, 1988; Baillie, 1992; Drahota & Eitzen, 1998; Drawer & Fuller, 2002; Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Gearing, 1999; Haerle, 1975; Lerch, 1981; McKenna & Thomas, 2007; Stier, 2007) or elite amateur/scholastic sport (e.g., Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte, 2004; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Curtis & Ennis, 1988; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon, 1997; Harrison & Lawrence, 2003; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Kourkouris, 1991, 1994; Lally, 2007; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007; Perna, Ahlgren, & Zaichkowsky, 1999; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stambulova, Stephan, & Japhag, 2007; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Ungerleider, 1997; Webb et al., 1998; Werthner & Orlick, 1986), but very few studies regarding how this process could be affected by a transition program (notable exceptions include Drawer and Fuller's (2002) investigation of the retirement assistance provided by the English Professional Footballers' Association, Gorely, Lavallee, Bruce, Teale, and Lavallee's (2001) review of the Australian Athlete Career and Education program, North and Lavallee's (2004) research on the United Kingdom Athlete Career and Education

program, Petitpas et al.'s (1992) examination of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) Career Assistance Program for Athletes, and Stankovich, Meeker, and Henderson's (2001) brief review of Positive Transitions for Student Athletes). The paucity of inquiry in this regard led Wylleman et al. (2004) to call for further evaluative research:

> a clear need remains to examine the effectiveness of the service provided by these programs in terms of outcomes (e.g. job placements made) or changing behavior, not only in view of furthering our understanding on how best to help personal development and performance of athletes through the provision of sports career transition services, but also in view of accountability. (p. 17)

Attending to this gap in the athletic career retirement literature, the intent of the present study (a descriptive case study) was two-fold: to examine the athletic career transitions of former professional hockey players; and to determine the effectiveness of the Life After Hockey program (by assessing the impact of specific interventions and services on retirement adjustment/quality of life). The particular research questions guiding the study thus were: what are the lived experiences of former professional hockey players (more specifically, former Life After Hockey program participants)?; what factors/resources aid or impede successful transition to post-playing life?; how does the Life After Hockey program attempt to assist (current or former) professional hockey players?; and, how has the Life After Hockey program affected the athletic career transitions and/or post-playing lives of former professional hockey players? The findings provided hereafter: are meant to offer insight into various facets of athletic career transition; and signify an attempt to add to, challenge, and/or reaffirm the work of others.

Chapter Two - Review of Literature

Theoretical Perspectives on Athletic Career Transitions

In attempting to understand the various facets of athletic career retirement, researchers have employed and/or developed a variety of theoretical explanatory frameworks. Initially, these frameworks came from gerontological models of aging and thanatological models of death and dying. Limitations in these models, however, led to the greater acceptance and use of adult transition models. The contributions and use of each of these perspectives in the study of athletic retirement are subsequently delineated.

Social Gerontological Models

Gerontology, as a scientific field of study, can be described as being concerned with aging and age-related processes (Markson, 2003). The field of study consists of several sub-disciplines, including biological, psychological, and social gerontology; the latter of which concentrates on the mutual interaction between society and the aged (Lavallee, 2000). Researchers have previously suggested that several social gerontological perspectives may be applied in explaining the relationship between athletic career retirement and successful aging (cf. Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Lerch, 1981; McPherson, 1980; Rosenberg, 1981). Included among these perspectives are: activity theory, subculture theory, disengagement theory, continuity theory, social breakdown theory, and exchange theory.

The first perspective, activity theory, argues that individuals attempt to maintain a set level of activity over the course of a life by replacing lost roles with new ones (Havighurst & Albrech, 1953; Friedmann & Havighurst, 1954). Several theorists have suggested that the theory may be applicable in examining the retirement experiences of

athletes. McPherson (1980), for example, noted that the theory may apply to those individuals who replace their lost athletic role with a new activity. Rosenberg (1981) added that athletes may be susceptible, more so than others in society, to adjustment difficulties upon retirement. The basis for Rosenberg's (1981) argument stemmed from the comparatively greater decrease in levels of activity faced by athletes.

Baillie and Danish (1992), alternatively, warned that the theory may be limited given the unique nature of competitive sport (e.g., schedules, activities). Providing substantive evidence in support, Drahota and Eitzen (1998) found that several retired athletes go through a period of "withdrawal," in which physical, emotional, social, financial, chemical, and mental aspects of sport were difficult to replace. In some instances, these aspects of sport were never replaced (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998). The theory may also be limited because, as Rosenberg (1981) noted, satisfaction in old age is not strictly dependent upon retaining earlier activity patterns.

Subculture theory (Rose, 1962, 1965) builds upon activity theory by accounting for the possibility of being well adjusted despite being less active. The premise of subculture theory holds that as aging individuals disengage from society, a pattern of interaction (i.e., a group consciousness) develops with other individuals holding similar backgrounds and/or interests (Rose, 1965). In this way, the aging individual may find an environment supportive of his or her lifestyle.

Although providing support in one respect, the subculture may also work to the detriment of the individual. As Rosenberg (1981) noted, subculture theory is of particular "value in explaining the existence of mechanisms in professional sport which deny or obscure retirement" (p. 122). Given an apparent association between a failure to prepare

for retirement and transition difficulties (e.g., Alfermann, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001), subculture theory may assist in revealing the source of various adjustment problems.

The theory has, however, been identified as having some shortcomings. Marshall (1978), for example, argued that subculture theory is only applicable when integrated with other social gerontological theories. Gordon (1995) also questioned the utility of the theory by noting that the retiring athlete is moving out of, and not into, the proposed subculture.

Offered as an alternative to activity theory, disengagement theory (Cummings, Dean, Newell, & McCaffrey, 1960; Cummings & Henry, 1961) proposes that society and the aging individual mutually withdraw from one another for the benefit and satisfaction of both. Based on findings from the Kansas City Study of Adult Life, Cummings et al. (1960) argued that disengagement provides a mechanism by which the elderly may be replaced by youth with minimal disruption to the functioning of the social system. In an occupational context, disengagement promotes both the advancement of younger workers into the labour force and the pursuit of leisure by the elderly. Retirement, a system-induced mechanism, was thus described as being able to meet the mutually exclusive interests of both society and the aging individual (Cummings et al., 1960).

Researchers of athletic retirement have not, however, found the theory to be generally applicable. Among the reasons for this view is the notion that athletic retirement need not be equated with permanent leave from the work force (Lavallee, 2000). For example, Jasinski and Fletcher (2003) found that of 773 retired professional hockey players, at least 672 (87%) had been employed following the conclusion of their playing careers (no mention was made if the remaining 13% of "retirees" held a post-

playing occupation). In other instances, players and organizations (society) may not mutually withdraw from one another. Lerch (1981), for one, found several examples of former Major League Baseball (MLB) players refusing to withdraw from their sport, despite significant declines in ability and performance. As a result of these inadequacies, it has been suggested that disengagement theory offers little to the understanding of athletic retirement (Lavallee, 2000).

Unlike other social gerontological theories, continuity theory (Atchley, 1976, 1980; Williams & Wirth, 1965) allows for change to be readily incorporated into one's prior history. According to the theory, individuals adapt most successfully to aging if they maintain a lifestyle similar to that which they developed in earlier years (Atchley, 1976). Atchley (1987) added that continuity consists of both internal and external considerations. Internal continuity accounts for such personal elements as an individual's temperament, preferences, dispositions, and skills (Atchley, 1987). Conversely, external considerations include overt behaviours, role relationships as well as physical and social environments (Atchley, 1987).

It is also worth noting that continuity theory is unlike activity theory in one particular way. Where activity theory would have an individual replace lost roles with new ones, continuity theory allows for individuals with multiple roles to reallocate time and energy from the lost role to the roles remaining. This final point provides, arguably, continuity theory's greatest value to sport retirement researchers. Rosenberg (1981) noted that if the lost role (activity) was of significant importance to the individual, the remaining roles may not be able to serve as satisfactory replacements. Athletes without

suitable and alternative roles are thus predicted to be highly susceptible to career transition difficulties (Rosenberg, 1981).

Although supported by Rosenberg (1981), continuity theory is not without its detractors. Lerch (1981), for example, found little support for his proposition that continuity theory could predict levels of adjustment to athletic retirement. Several researchers have also noted that the salience and persistence of an athletic identity (i.e., an internal measure of continuity) can significantly and negatively affect the ease with which athletes make the transition to a post-playing life (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Petitpas, 2000; Hinitz, 1988; Grove et al., 1997; Lavallee, Gordon, & Grove, 1997; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). That is, continuity, the maintenance of an athletic identity, has been found to be detrimental to the transition experience.

A fifth social gerontological perspective, social breakdown theory (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973), proposes that with role loss (e.g., retirement, widowhood) comes susceptibility to external labelling. This labelling, when unfavourable, will lead individuals to internalize negative feelings and withdraw from certain activities (Kuypers & Bengston, 1973). Withdrawal brings about a subsequent deterioration of skills and causes the individual to question his or her continuation of a role. This, in turn, may promote further role loss or withdrawal, allowing for a self-defeating cycle to perpetuate. To restore and maintain a more positive self-image, Kuypers and Bengston (1973) proposed the use of a social reconstruction cycle which consists of, among other things, counseling and intervention.

Rosenberg (1981) was among the first sport theorists to acknowledge social breakdown theory's utility to athletic retirement research. In particular, he described how

the withdrawal cycle may be illustrative of elite athletes' vulnerability to social judgement upon retirement. Edwards and Meier (1984), in their investigation of former professional hockey players, also found support for social breakdown theory's application to athletic retirement. The notion of social reconstruction has also been readily supported by several scholars (cf. Alfermann, 2000; Baillie & Danish, 1992; Lavallee et al., 2000). As aforementioned, this type of social reconstruction may take several forms, including preparing for retirement and counseling.

Social gerontology provides one final perspective worthy of consideration, exchange theory (Blau, 1963; Homans, 1961). As Fortunato and Gilbert (2003) explained, exchange theory holds at least four basic assumptions:

1. individuals try to choose interactions from which they will 'profit' in some fashion - be it economic, psychological, or social. Individuals and groups attempt to act rationally in order to maximise rewards or profits to themselves and to minimize costs. Reciprocity is regarded as implicit in such interactions;
2. individuals assess their past experiences of exchange in order to predict the outcomes of exchanges in the present and future and they do this by using a cost/benefit analysis;
3. it is assumed that interaction between individuals will be sustained as long as it is judged to be more rewarding than costly;
4. and power is derived from imbalances in social exchange where, if one individual is dependent on another, the former loses power whereas the latter accrues it. (p. 12)

Successful aging is thus described as being tied to an individual's ability to maximize returns through the rearrangement of social networks and activities (Blau, 1964).

As with continuity theory, exchange theory has received both support and criticism from theorists. Rosenberg (1981), for example, argued that exchange theory could be best utilized with athletes in providing them with some perspective regarding their continued relationship with sport, including the various social negotiations that occur over the course of this relationship. In their investigation of former competitive Canadian gymnasts, Johns, Linder, and Wolko (1990) were able to add a limited amount of support to exchange theory. Koukouris (1991), however, argued that exchange theory was limited in its applicability to athletic retirement as it fails to account for the possibility of athletes holding post-playing occupations.

Consensus among sport researchers suggests that a similar concern for applicability exists with all social gerontological theories. Researchers have, for example, criticized several of the theories for their conceptualization of retirement as an event, rather than a process (cf. Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Crook & Robertson, 1991; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). Taylor and Ogilvie (2001), in summarizing the research efforts of others, noted that the aforementioned theories have received little empirical support. With some theories, investigation has been avoided entirely. Wylleman et al. (2004) also provided a striking criticism of social gerontological theory as applied to athletic retirement, noting:

> although, at first hand, other gerontological theories seemed to enable sport psychologists to explain or even predict the quality of athletic retirement, they were found to fail as, in comparison, to occupational retirement (a) athletes retire

> at an earlier age, (b) retired athletes will generally continue into an occupational career, and because (c) career termination need not be an inherently negative event requiring considerable adjustment. (p. 9)

These sentiments were shared by Blinde and Greendorfer (1985). Given such criticism, it is possible to conclude that social gerontological theories are, in themselves, inadequate in addressing athletic career transition.

Thanatological Models

The process of retiring from athletics has also been examined within the conceptual framework of thanatology, the study of death and dying. Beginning as a field with a particular interest in the biomedical causes of death, thanatology has since grown to encapsulate the contributions of several varied disciplines (Balk, Wogrin, Thornton, & Meagher, 2007). Among those contributing to the study of death and dying are sport theorists, who have suggested that several thanatological theories have implications for the career transition process (cf. Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Lerch, 1984; Rosenberg, 1984). The theories of social death, social awareness, and stages of death have been considered particularly relevant in this line of research.

Social death refers to the condition of being treated as if one was dead despite being biologically and legally alive (Kalish, 1966). Individuals experiencing social death are typically subjected to feelings of ostracism, isolation, and/or loss in social functioning (Rosenberg, 1984). Accounts of retiring athletes suffering from social death are provided by several researchers, including Ball (1976), Lerch (1984), and Rosenberg (1984). Despite these accounts, theorists have generally described the concept of social death as

being excessively negative, overly dramatic and reflecting the experiences of few (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001; Wylleman et al., 2004).

A second thanatological perspective considered to be applicable to the retiring athlete is Glaser and Strauss's (1965) theory of social awareness. The theory proposes that observable and predictable patterns of communication exist between dying individuals and those interacting with them (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). These patterns of communication, termed awareness contexts, describe "what each interacting person knows of the patient's defined status, along with his [sic] recognition of others' awareness of his own definition" (p. 10). In total, four awareness contexts are said to exist: closed awareness, suspected awareness, mutual pretence, and open awareness (Glaser & Strauss, 1965).

In closed awareness, the terminal patient is unaware of his or her impending death, despite family members and medical personnel having such knowledge (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). Factors contributing to this state of awareness include: a patient's inexperience in recognizing signs of death, physicians' reluctance to disclose such information, a family's desire to not inform the dying individual, and collusion on the part of hospital staff (to avoid informing the patient of his or her condition) (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). When applied to sport, the retiring athlete assumes the role played by the terminal patient. In this context, teammates, coaches, and managers may well be aware of a player's impending release or trade, but do not immediately inform him or her of such (Lavallee, 2000; Lerch, 1984).

A state of suspected awareness exists when the terminal patient suspects the inevitable death others are aware of and attempts to confirm these suspicions (Glaser &

Strauss, 1965). Responding to the patient's curiosity, family members, friends, and medical staff will typically negate any possible suspicions (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). This awareness context, and the factors contributing to it, may too be compared to the experiences of the retiring athlete. Lerch (1984), for one, provided several examples of how this awareness context may come to exist in professional sport, including an equipment manager's decision not to pack a player's bag, and the tone of interaction between players and coaches.

In the mutual pretence context, the terminal patient, family members, friends, and medical personnel are all aware of the patient's condition (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). Rather than openly acknowledging the patient's state, the group enters into an unspoken agreement to behave as if the inevitable death is not going to occur (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). Predictably, this context may apply to any situation in which athletes, coaches, and management are aware of an athlete's impending retirement but nothing is spoken (Lavallee, 2000).

A context of open awareness emerges only once the mutual pretence context can no longer be sustained (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). The context of open awareness exists when everyone in the terminal patient's immediate social circle openly acknowledges the patient is dying (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). Unlike the previous awareness contexts, open awareness allows individuals to discuss their feelings and the terminal patient to feel a greater sense of control (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). For athletes, the context of open awareness may provide the impetus to plan for retirement. However, as Rosenberg (1984) noted, it is more likely that athletes will experience contexts of closed and/or suspicion awareness.

The final thanatological perspective to be applied to athletic retirement was originally provided by Kubler-Ross in 1969. This perspective, termed stages of death, accounts for an individual's psychological progression in accepting their impending demise (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Lavallee (2000) noted that these stages of death, as applied to athletic retirement, include the following:

> denial and isolation, in which athletes initially refuse to acknowledge their inevitable career termination; anger, in which retiring athletes become disturbed at the overall situation; bargaining, in which individuals try to negotiate for a lengthened career in sport; depression, in which athletes experience distress reaction to retirement; and acceptance, in which individuals eventually come to accept their career transition. (pp. 8-9)

Within the athletic retirement literature, empirical support for Kubler-Ross's (1969) stage theory has been provided by Blinde and Stratta (1992). Specifically, in examining the involuntary and unanticipated retirement experiences of former collegiate athletes, Blinde and Stratta (1992) found several individuals describing their transition as paralleling Kubler-Ross's (1969) stages of death.

Support for the stage theory, beyond that provided by Blinde and Stratta (1992), has, however, been rather limited. Lerch (1984) and Rosenberg (1984), for example, found Kubler-Ross's (1969) theory to be applicable to athletic retirement, but provided only anecdotal evidence in support. Without further empirical support, Lerch (1984) concluded that the theory may lack universality.

A lack of empirical support has also been one of several criticisms facing the thanatological framework in general. Among the other criticisms are Greendorfer and

Blinde's (1985) contention that thanatological models lack clinical utility. Crook and Robertson (1991) and Drahota and Eitzen (1998), on the other hand, questioned equating athletic retirement with death. As both pairs of authors noted, athletic retirement need not be a negative experience nor involve adjustment difficulties. This negative depiction of athletic retirement has also led some to question the generalizability of the theories described (cf. Gordon, 1995; Lavallee, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998). Finally, and not unlike social gerontological theories, thanatology has been criticized for depicting athletic retirement as an "end-of-life change" (end-of-career change) rather than a "mid-life change" (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998, p. 265); the latter of which is more representative of athletes' experiences. Thus, models of thanatology, much like those of social gerontology, have been found to be limited in their applicability to the study of athletic retirement.

Adult Transition Models

Upon recognizing the inadequacies of social gerontological and thanatological models, sport theorists began to rely more heavily on models of adult transition. Characterizing retirement as a process rather than a singular event, models of adult transition have provided researchers with an alternative framework capable of delineating the complex nature of career transition in sport. Models of adult transition applicable, utilized, and/or developed in examining the retirement experiences of athletes include: Sussman's (1972) analytic model, Hopson and Adams's (1977) seven-step model of transition, Brammer and Abrego's (1981) interactive model of coping with transition, Schlossberg's (1981, 1984) model of human adaptation to transition (and its more recent rendition, the 4S System (Schlossberg, Waters & Goodman, 1995)), Taylor and Ogilvie's

(1994) conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes, Drahota and Eitzen's (1998) modification of Ebaugh's (1977, 1988) role exit theory, and Stambulova et al.'s (2007) amalgamation of career transition frameworks.

Among the first transition models to be utilized in research pertaining to athletic career retirement was Sussman's (1972) analytic model. The model provides a multidimensional projection of the career transition process and accounts for the effect of personal, social, and environmental variables. Specific variables said to affect perceptions of retirement include: situational and structural (e.g., circumstances of retirement, social class position, retirement income, marital status, pre-retirement preparation, availability of social systems), individual (e.g., demeanour, values, motives, needs, goals, habits, attitudes), social (e.g., linking with friends, family, and/or individuals from work), and constraining (e.g., societal definitions, economic-generational cycles, employer attitudes) (Sussman, 1972). These variables are additionally bound by such factors as an individual's biologic state, the physical location in which the individual is settled, the current state of governance, and societal images of retirement (Sussman, 1972). The cumulative interaction of these variables and factors was considered to result in the manifestation of a unique and individualized retirement experience (Sussman, 1972).

The potential relevance of Sussman's (1972) analytical model to athletic career retirement was first recognized by Hill and Lowe (1974). In their review of athletic retirement, the pair concluded:

> an examination of various components of Sussman's model demonstrates its relevance to the study of retirement from sport. Situational and structural variables such as the circumstances surrounding the closing of a playing career,

> and the degrees of preretirement preparation, all vary from player to player. Individual variables such as the athlete's personality, motives, needs, habits and attitudes also merit attention as they govern his perception of retirement. These factors, together with the various linking systems and the social and economic constraints which most retirees encounter, continue to influence the athlete in his ultimate choice of career. (Hill & Lowe, 1974, p. 28)

Despite the model's intuitive appeal, it has failed to garner any greater support from sport theorists. The reason for this disregard may be traced to Sussman's (1972) original work, in which he described the process of athletic career transition as being unproblematic (due not only to an athlete's ability to prepare for the brevity of his or her sport career but also because most are provided with paid employment after athletic retirement) (Coakley, 1983; Lavallee, 2000). An alternative and perhaps equally reasonable explanation for this disregard comes not as a result of Sussman's (1972) questionable commentary, but rather the perceived utility of more recently published models. Before addressing the two models most frequently employed in athletic retirement research, attention to the works of Hopson and Adams (1977) and Brammer and Abrego (1981) is deserved.

Hopson and Adams (1977) viewed transitions as processes in which an individual not only experiences a discontinuity in his or her life, but must also modify behaviour and/or assumptions accordingly. The two theorists developed a seven-step model to describe the process by which individuals undergo transition (Hopson & Adams, 1977). The step model includes the following individual responses: shock and immobilization, the expression of negative feelings related to an event (e.g., retirement); minimization and denial, one's attempts to reduce the impact of negative feelings; self-doubt and/or

depression; letting go, working through the feelings associated with an event; testing options, the exploration of new opportunities; search for meaning, undertaking a process of self-discovery; and integration, incorporating learned insights, and renewing oneself (Hopson & Adams, 1977).

Incorporating elements from the works of Hopson and Adams (1977) and Moos and Tsu (1977), Brammer and Abrego (1981) developed the interactive model of coping with transition. Broken into three distinct segments, the model accounts for: factors potentially affecting the transition (e.g., personal, transition-specific, physical and social environment), the psychological response of the individual to the transition (i.e., the cognitive appraisals, adaptive tasks and coping mechanisms of the individual), and the transition's outcome. Taken together with Brammer and Abrego's (1981) coping skills taxonomy, the model illustrates, for researchers and clinicians alike, how one may intervene in the transition process.

Although providing insight into the transition process, the models of Hopson and Adams (1977) and Brammer and Abrego (1981) have largely been overlooked by those studying retirement from sport. Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) have suggested that Hopson and Adams's (1977) step model, much like Kubler-Ross's (1969) stages of death model, fails to indicate "what factors lead to the traumatic responses or what enables individuals to progress through the respective stages to reach closure" (p. 4). Moreover, as Lerch (1984) questioned the universal application of Kubler-Ross's (1969) work, so too may others question the applicability of Hopson and Adams's (1977) model.

The work of Brammer and Abrego (1981), on the other hand, has been given only scant attention. Taylor and Ogilvie (2001) are the sole sport theorists to comment on the

merits of the interactive model. As could then be expected, no critique devaluing the model exists within the sport retirement literature. A cursory examination of Brammer and Abrego's (1981) work may, however, give reason to conclude that the authors were less interested in the factors affecting transition than the responses thereto. Lacking such detail, sport theorists may have discounted Brammer and Abrego's (1981) model and turned instead to the work of Schlossberg (1981).

In her original work, Schlossberg (1981) depicted transitions as involving three components: the transition itself, factors affecting transition, and an individual's eventual adaptation. Similar to Brammer and Abrego's (1981) model, Schlossberg's (1981) model of human adaptation to transition accounts for three factors interacting with the transition process: an individual's perception of the particular transition, the characteristics of the pre- and post-transition environments, and the characteristics of the individual. Although similar in this one regard, a critical distinction between the two models may be made; where Brammer and Abrego (1981) provided a comprehensive overview of the coping strategies related to transitions, Schlossberg (1981) provided a detailed account of the variables characterizing the aforementioned transition factors.

The variables characterizing one's perception of a particular transition include: role change (gain or loss), affect (positive or negative), source (internal or external), timing (on-time or off-time), onset (gradual or sudden), duration (permanent, temporary, or uncertain), and degree of stress (Schlossberg, 1981). Characteristics of the pre- and post- transition environments account for the physical setting of the transition as well as the availability of internal (e.g., family, friends, spouse) and/or institutional (e.g., employer, social programs) support systems (Schlossberg, 1981). Finally, the individual

attributes accounted for in the model include: sex (and sex-role identification), age (and life stage), state of health, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, value orientation, psychosocial competences, and previous transition experience (Schlossberg, 1981).

In 1995, Schlossberg's (1981) original model of human adaptation to transition was revised to create the 4S System (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). The 4S System once again describes an individual's transition process as involving three components, this time titled "approaching transition," "taking stock" and "taking charge" (Schlossberg et al., 1995). The first component, "approaching transition," is similar to the first segment of Schlossberg's (1981) previous work but considers such variables as the transition's type, impact, and impetus. The second component, "taking stock," is again similar to Schlossberg's (1981) earlier work but features one noticeable change; the 4S System incorporates the three factors previously accounted for in the model of human adaptation to transition (factors termed "situation," "support" and "self" in the 4S System) as well as a fourth, an individual's potential coping strategies ("strategies" representing the fourth "S" in the revised model). Further additions were made to the final component of the 4S System, "taking charge." In this component, Schlossberg et al. (1995) added more detailed descriptions of the transition phases as well as insights into the utilization of newly acquired, transition-resultant abilities.

The transition models outlined by Schlossberg and her associates (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984; Schlossberg et al., 1995) have received considerable attention from researchers investigating the athletic career transition process. Schlossberg's (1981) original work, in particular, has acted as both a basis for theoretical positions (e.g., Pearson & Petitpas, 1990) and a component in athletic retirement research endeavours

(e.g., Chambers, 2002; Swain, 1991). Commonly cited among sport theorists (e.g., Baillie, 1993; Crook & Robertson, 1991; Gorbett, 1985; Lavallee & Anderson, 2000; Wylleman et al., 2004), the work of Schlossberg (1981, 1984) has received substantial support from the aforementioned studies of Swain (1991) and Chambers (2002). Indirect support for elements of both models has also been provided by several researchers in their own investigations of athletic retirement (e.g., Cecic Erpic et al., 2004; Parker, 1994; Stambulova et al., 2007; Wheeler, Malone, Van Vlack, Nelson, & Steadward, 1996; Wheeler, Steadward, Legg, Hutzler, Campbell, & Johnson, 1999).

Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) were not, however, as supportive of Schlossberg's (1981, 1984) early work. Describing the models proposed by both Sussman (1972) and Schlossberg (1981, 1984) as "lack(ing) operationalized detail," Taylor and Ogilvie (1994, p. 4) proceeded to construct the first transition model specific to athletes, the conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes. The conceptual model accounts for the entire course of the athletic career transition process, including: the initial causal factors, factors affecting adaptation, available resources for adaptation to career transition, the quality of the career transition, and interventions for those suffering from a distressful transition (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Although lacking the same degree of empirical support as Schlossberg's models of transition (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984; Schlossberg et al., 1995), Taylor and Ogilvie's (1994) conceptual model has received a great deal of regard among sport theorists (Cecic Erpic et al., 2004; Grove et al., 1997; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavallee, 2000; Stambulova et al., 2007; Wylleman et al., 2004). In general, the model has been considered to be sound in structure and helpful in assessing the athletic career transition process (Lavallee, 2000).

A second model specific to the career transition process of athletes comes from the modification of Ebaugh's (1977, 1988) role-exit theory; a theory that may be generally described as being concerned with an individual's mid-life transition away from a salient role-identity. As Drahota and Eitzen (1998) summarized:

> role exit is depicted as a process of disengagement, disidentification, and resocialization. Disengagement involves the actual means of withdrawing from the type of behaviour associated with a role. Disidentification refers to the time when individuals stop associating their self-identity with the role being exited. The process of leaving a role means that one also is being socialized into a new role. In effect, exes (Ebaugh's term for those who have exited from a significant role) disengage from previous role expectations while learning new ones. Whereas in socialization the individual incorporates the new identity into a vision of self, with the exit from a role the person retains leftovers of the previous role. This is especially apparent with professional athletes. To be successful in incorporating the new role, the individual must merge aspects of the past identity with those of the new. (pp. 266-267)

Ebaugh (1977, 1988) thus conceptualized the role-exit process as involving four stages: "first doubts," in which individuals begin to question their continued commitment to a role-identity; "seeking alternatives," where substitute role-identities are sought out and/or rehearsed; "the turning point," a time in which individuals decide whether or not to retain a particular role-identity; and finally, "creating the ex-role," in which individuals simultaneously manage residual and new role-identities.

Ebaugh's (1977, 1988) role-exit theory has twice been implemented in research pertaining to athletic career transitions. Stier (2007), on the one hand, found direct support for Ebaugh's (1977, 1988) theory in his study of former Swedish professional tennis players. Drahota and Eitzen (1998), on the other hand, found that Ebaugh's (1977, 1988) theory required modification in order to fit the experiences of former North American professional athletes. Three structural modifications were ultimately made in Drahota and Eitzen's (1998) reconceptualization of Ebaugh's (1977, 1988) role-exit model: a new stage, titled "original doubts," was included and precedes the point at which an individual becomes a professional athlete; "the turning point" was divided to account for involuntary and voluntary exits from sport; and the final stage, "creating the ex-role," included consideration for an athlete's difficulty in withdrawing from his or her professional life. Drahota and Eitzen's (1998) modification of Ebaugh's (1977, 1988) role exit theory has not, however, received any empirical support nor consideration from those researching the subject.

The most recent model developed for the study of athlete-specific transitions was provided by Stambulova et al. in 2007. The model was generated through the amalgamation of several earlier works, both specific to sport (Stambulova, 1997, 2003; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994, 2001) and not (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Schlossberg, 1981), and consists of six components: pre-conditions for athletic retirement, perceived transition demands, internal and external factors related to coping, coping strategies, perceived quality and long-term consequences of the transition, and ecological context. The last of these components, ecological context, was based on the work of Bronfenbenner (1979) and added to account for potential cross-cultural differences between retiring athletes

(Stambulova et al., 2007). It should be noted that the model has not as of yet received significant scholarly attention; this, however, may be due in large part to the model's newness.

Although not yet receiving significant attention, Stambulova et al.'s (2007) model does support the view that "the transition process is multidimensional (with changes in several spheres of live [sic]), multilevel (with changes on various psychological levels - from emotional reactions to personal identities) and multifactor (with a number of factors interplayed, including national identity)" (p. 114). Accounting for the complexity in the transition process, the framework of adult transition has gained a significant degree of support from sport theorists and is widely regarded as providing the greatest potential in the study of athletic retirement transition (Gordon, 1995; Lavallee, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998). The framework has also illuminated the importance of studying three particular aspects related to athletic career retirement: the causes of career termination, factors affecting the adaptation process, and available coping strategies (Gordon, 1995; Lavallee, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1998).

Causes of Athletic Career Termination

Termination of an athletic career may be tied to any number of reasons, both within and out of the control of the individual athlete. Examples of these reasons include (individually or in combination): age (Allison & Meyer, 1988; Mihovilovic, 1968; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Weinberg & Arond, 1952); injury/physical fatigue (Allison & Meyer, 1988; Drawer & Fuller, 2002; Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Kleiber & Brock, 1992; Koukouris, 1991; Mihovilovic, 1968; Stambulova et al., 2007; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Ungerleider, 1997; Webb et al., 1998; Weinberg &

Arond, 1952; Werthner & Orlick, 1986); deselection (Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Drawer & Fuller, 2002; Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Haerle, 1975; Lerch, 1984; McKenna & Thomas, 2007; Rosenberg, 1984; Webb et al., 1998); a lack of funding/financial support (Koukouris, 1991, 1994; Ungerleider, 1997; Werthner & Orlick, 1986); loss of motivation, enjoyment, and/or ability to achieve athletic goals (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Koukouris, 1991; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Webb et al., 1998; Werthner & Orlick, 1986); achievement of athletic goals (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Ungerleider, 1997; Werthner & Orlick, 1986); difficulties with athletic lifestyle (Allison & Meyer, 1988; Koukouris, 1991; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993); difficulties with a sport bureaucracy (i.e., coaches, team, athletic system) (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Werthner & Orlick, 1986); pursuit of new opportunities (most typically employment) (Alfermann et al., 2004; Allison & Meyer, 1988; Drawer & Fuller, 2002; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Webb et al., 1998; Werthner & Orlick, 1986); and conflicting family commitments (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Ungerleider, 1997). In an attempt to clarify this area of research, sport theorists have proposed classifying causes of athletic retirement according to a limited number of factors.

Several theorists have, for example, classified the causes as being either voluntary or involuntary in nature (e.g., Alfermann, 2000; Crook & Robertson, 1991; Webb et al., 1998; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). This classification system has, however, been found to be flawed, because, as Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) demonstrated, the distinction between freely chosen and forced retirement is not always clear (e.g., a gymnast choosing to retire as a result of conflicts with a coach). Alternative classifications of causes for retirement include Alfermann et al.'s (2004) planned versus unplanned division, as well as Cecic

Erpic et al.'s (2004) athletic versus non-athletic distinction. A final and unique classification system is provided by Fernandez, Stephan, and Fouquereau (2006).

With their Athletes' Retirement Decision Inventory (ARDI), Fernandez et al. (2006) proposed a four-factor classification of retirement causes; the four factors being termed anti-pull, pull, anti-push, and push. The anti-pull factor was described as being concerned with the perceived difficulties and risk associated with a post-playing life (Fernandez et al., 2006). Examples of items within this factor include "is afraid of changes generated by ending a sports career" and "is afraid of not being able to adapt to another job" (Fernandez et al., 2006, p. 413). Conversely, the pull factor accounted for positive aspects related to a post-playing life (Fernandez et al., 2006). Examples of items within this factor include "can develop new vocational skills," "can have a more regular routine" and "can prove that one is able to do other things" (Fernandez et al., 2006, pp. 413-414). The third factor, titled anti-push, corresponds to an athlete's continued attachment with his/her sport career and includes items reflecting such (e.g., "still enjoys participating in his/her sport") (Fernandez et al., 2006, p. 414). Finally, the push factor expresses the negative components associated with an athlete's present life. Items within this factor include "is in conflict with the governing bodies" and "is not satisfied with the running of one's sports club" (Fernandez et al., 2006, p. 414). Collectively, the ARDI has the potential to assist counselors in examining a player's psychological connection to his/her sport as well as factors affecting adjustment to a post-playing life.

Factors Affecting Transition

As suggested by both Schlossberg (1981, 1984) and Taylor and Ogilvie (1994, 2001), several factors contribute to determining the quality of athletic career transition.

Factors considered to have particular significance to the transition experience include an athlete's identity as well as the nature of athletic retirement (Lavallee, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). These two factors have the potential to cause distress and may lead to transition difficulties for the retiring athlete.

Identity

For many professional and elite amateur athletes, the apex of a career comes as a result of years of dedication to a particular craft. Given the lengthy process and level of commitment required, it should not be surprising that several individuals develop a highly salient athletic identity. Burke (1991) described an identity as "a set of meanings to the self in a social role or situation defining what it means to be who one is" (p. 837). Stets and Burke (2000) added that with an identity comes not only the categorization of the self as an occupant of a particular role, but also a subsequent incorporation of meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance.

Promoting and maintaining the salience of an athletic identity may be beneficial to the individual athlete in that it acts as a positive reinforcement for both exercise adherence and one's drive for excellence in sport (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). In more general terms, the maintenance of a single identity, above all others, has the potential to provide the individual with a sense of stability and direction. Although beneficial to the athlete during his or her active career, the prominence of a single identity can, in fact, be detrimental to the individual upon retirement.

Danish (1983) and Petitpas (2002) explained that difficulties in athletic retirement transitions may be tied to selective optimization, "a process in which athletes give

exclusive attention to their sport at the expense of all other interests" (Petitpas, 2002, p. 257). Failing to have alternative activities and roles to rely upon, athletes with narrow identities are considered to be more likely to cling to their sport careers and less likely to find satisfaction and ego gratification in other domains (Lavallee, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). Researchers investigating the link between athletic identity and career transition experiences have found that athletes with narrow identities are indeed more susceptible to difficulties associated with retirement (Chambers, 2002; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Grove et al., 1997; Hinitz, 1988; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally, 2007; Lavallee & Robinson, 2007; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Ungerleider, 1997; Webb et al., 1998; Werthner & Orlick, 1986).

Chambers (2002), for example, reported in her study of retired professional hockey players a correlation between athletic identity and transition difficulties. In particular, Chambers (2002) found that players with heightened athletic identity were more likely to experience emotional adjustment difficulties upon retirement. Similarly, Grove et al. (1997) found that athletes with a strong and exclusive athletic identity were more likely to be susceptible to career termination distress. The researchers also indicated that these individuals experienced a more severe and prolonged adaptation process (Grove et al., 1997). Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) and Lavallee and Robinson (2007) added that the loss of a highly salient athletic identity may bring about a sense of disorientation and loss of meaning in one's life. Taken together, these findings illustrate the necessity for athletes to engage in identity exploratory behaviours (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Failure to engage in such activities will, as Pearson and Petitpas (1990) noted, "inhibit

development of important life skills and the acquisition of varied life experiences that can be useful in career and personal planning" (p. 8).

Nature of Athletic Retirement

The transition experiences of retiring athletes may also be affected by the nature in which a career is terminated. Elements of an athlete's career that are of relevance when assessing this factor include: the voluntariness (or involuntariness) of the career termination, and the degree to which athletic goals were achieved over the course of a career. Athletes failing to retire voluntarily and/or achieve their athletic goals have been found to be particularly susceptible to transition-related difficulties (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Cecic Erpic et al., 2004; Chambers, 2002; Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; Lavallee et al., 1997; Mihovilovic, 1968; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stambulova et al., 2007; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982; Wheeler et al., 1996).

Issues related to involuntary retirement are typically believed to emerge as a result of one of two reasons. Taylor and Ogilvie (2001), for one, described the issue of involuntary retirement as being related to an individual's perceived lack of control over their own fate. As the pair summarized:

> though the issue has not been addressed extensively in the sport literature, there is considerable research from the areas of clinical, social, and physiological psychology that demonstrates that perceptions of control are related to many areas of human functioning, including sense of self-competence (White, 1974), the interpretation of self (Kelley, 1967), and other information (Jones & Davis, 1965). In addition, perceptions of control may influence individuals' feelings of helplessness (Friedlander, 1984, 1985), motivation (Wood & Bandura, 1989),

> physiological changes (Tache & Selye, 1985), and self-confidence (Bandura & Adams, 1977). Also, control has been associated with a variety of pathologies, including depression (Alloy & Abramson, 1982), anxiety (Garfield & Bergin, 1978), substance abuse (Shiffman, 1982) and disassociative disorders (Putnam, 1989). (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001, p. 680)

With age/physiological collapse, deselection, and injury believed to be three of the most common causes of athletic retirement (Lavallee, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001), athletes may often find themselves in a situation perceived to be beyond their own control. In these situations, the affected athlete becomes more susceptible to the difficulties aforementioned.

An alternative reasoning for the resultant issues of involuntary retirement is provided by Pearson and Petitpas (1990) and incorporates Neugarten's (1977) concept of on-time and off-time life events. Neugarten (1977) defined an on-time event as occurring at a developmentally typical point in life (e.g., the death of a parent in late adulthood). Predictably, off-time events were described as occurring at an unanticipated juncture (e.g., the death of a parent in early childhood). Pearson and Petitpas (1990) suggested that the timing of events (on- versus off-time) plays an integral part in predicting an individual's ability to not only anticipate a transition but also diminish transition-related difficulties. Off-time events, such as an unanticipated athletic retirement caused by injury, is of particular concern to athletes in that they limit an individual's ability to plan and make preparations for a transition. Retiring athletes failing to make such plans and/or prepare for the future have consistently been found to suffer greater distress in the

transition process (cf. Alfermann et al. 2004; Chambers, 2002; Lavallee et al., 1997; Perna et al., 1999; Stambulova et al., 2007; Wheeler et al., 1996).

Other Contributing Factors

Beyond factors related to one's athletic identity and the circumstances surrounding retirement, several other variables may too contribute to the quality of a transition experience. These variables include an individual's life course status (i.e., stage of development in life; Danish et al., 1993; Gearing, 1999; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000), financial dependency on sport (Lerch, 1981; McPherson, 1980; Werthner & Orlick, 1986), minority status (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1985; Harrison & Lawrence, 2003; Hill & Lowe, 1974), and marital status (Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). Athletes experiencing difficulties in career termination as a result of these factors, or others, may, however, turn to any number of available resources for assistance.

Resources Affecting Transition

The quality of adaptation to athletic retirement has been argued to be based, in part, on the resources utilized (or not utilized) by individual athletes (e.g., Grove et al., 1997; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). These resources may be categorized as being personal, social, or institutional in nature. Personal resources pertain to individual-level coping strategies utilized by the athlete in preparation of or in response to a transition. Social resources encompass the support networks available to an athlete from such sources as family and friends. The support provided by member organizations and professional staff (e.g., psychologists) can be categorized as institutional resources. As aforementioned, athletes may utilize any number of these resources to assist them in their transition processes.

Personal Resources

The termination of one's athletic career and the subsequent transition to a post-playing life can represent a highly stressful period for many athletes. To manage the various psychological, behavioural, and emotional challenges that may incur, athletes may enact any number of personal coping skills. Folkman and Lazarus (1991) defined coping as "cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p. 210).

The individual coping strategies available to athletes, as well as others, have generally been classified (Grove et al., 1997; Lavallee, 2000; Zeidner & Saklofske, 1996) as falling into one of three categories: problem-focused (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1991), emotion-focused (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1991), and avoidance-oriented (Endler & Parker, 1990). Problem-focused strategies include those processes that attempt to alter the situation causing distress for the individual (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1991). Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) suggested that examples of problem-focused strategies include: active coping, the initiation of direct action and increased effort in ameliorating the effects of a stressor; planning, the formulation of strategic actions to be taken against a stressor; suppression of competing activities (in order to focus on the stressor); restraint, the act of tactfully addressing a stressor at an appropriate time; and acceptance. A second category, emotion-focused strategies, account for efforts by the individual to regulate distress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1991). Carver et al. (1989) again provided several examples to illustrate this category, including: venting of emotions, and positive reinterpretation (or as Lazarus (1972) originally conceived and termed, cognitive restructuring, the process of redefining dimensions related to an event

so as to manage distressful emotions (i.e., construing a stressful event in positive terms)). A category of strategies falling beyond the work of Folkman and Lazarus (1980, 1991) was provided by Endler and Parker in 1990 and was termed avoidance-oriented. As the title of the category suggests, avoidance-oriented strategies represent activities undertaken by an individual in an effort to distance oneself, psychologically or otherwise, from the stressor. Examples of avoidance-oriented coping strategies include: denial, wishful thinking, escapism, self-distraction, mental and/or behavioural disengagement, and alcohol and/or substance abuse (Carver et al., 1989; Zeidner & Saklofske, 1996).

Alternative but similar categorizations of coping strategies have also been provided by Pearlin and Schooler (1978) and Brammer and Abrego (1981). Pearlin and Schooler (1978), for example, segregated coping strategies into three categories; categories which accounted for responses related to the situation, meaning, and resultant emotional distress caused by a stressor. Brammer and Abrego (1981), in their presentation of a coping intervention framework, provided a more unique classification system. In their work, Brammer and Abrego (1981) suggested that coping strategies, or skills, fall within one of five categories: skills in perceiving and responding to transitions; skills for assessing, building, and utilizing external support systems; skills for assessing, developing, and utilizing internal support systems; skills in reducing emotional and physical distress in managing stressful events; and skills for planning and implementing change. Despite there being value in analyzing global (category-level) strategies, investigators have more recently turned to conducting examinations of specific strategies (Carver et al., 1989; Grove et al., 1997).

Of the various coping strategies available to athletes, pre-retirement planning (which consists of such activities as psychological preparation, financial planning, continued education, and career exploration) has garnered the greatest amount of attention from scholars (Alfermann et al., 2004; Botterill, 1982; Cecic Erpic et al., 2004; Chambers, 2002; Crook & Roberson, 1991; Gorbett, 1985; Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Lavallee, 2000; Lavallee & Andersen, 2000; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Svoboda & Vanek, 1982). Much of this interest has come as a result of a select few and early studies in the subject. In one of these studies, Haerle (1975) found that only 25% of retired professional baseball players had considered a post-athletic occupation while playing. Blann and Zaichkowsky (1989) similarly reported that only 37% of professional hockey players and 25% of professional baseball players had a post-playing career plan before retirement.

In the time since the publication of Haerle's (1975) initial work, researchers have consistently found planning to positively affect the retirement adjustment processes of athletes. Alfermann et al. (2004), for example, found that planned retirement correlated with a higher satisfaction with one's career, more positive and less negative emotions after career termination, a shorter duration of adaptation to a post-playing life, and higher scores related to post-playing life satisfaction. Chambers (2002), in a study of former professional hockey players, found similar support for specific planning. In her study, it was revealed that planning correlated with improved emotional and functional adjustment. The lone exception to such conclusions was provided by Cecic Erpic et al. (2004), who found active planning, and the abruptness with which a career came to termination, to have no significant effect on the characteristics of the career termination process. Given the uniformity in findings, theorists have tended to view pre-retirement

planning as one of the most effective transition-related coping strategies available (Wylleman, De Knop, Menkehorst, Theeboom, & Annerel, 1993).

Several researchers (Grove, Lavallee, Gordon, & Harvey, 1998; McKenna & Thomas, 2007) have suggested that the athletic career transition process may be similarly eased through the use of account-making. Developed by Harvey, Weber, and Orbuch (1990), account-making is a multidimensional process which asks an individual to: confront a traumatic event and construct a related story (i.e., construct a story accounting for the nature of the event, the reason it happened, one's feelings in regard to the event and what it means for the future), refine and elaborate upon this perspective, confide this account with close others, and respond to the insights provided. In short, account-making may be described as a comprehensive self-reflective process. This process, as Grove et al. (1998) noted, should be beneficial to achieving therapeutic goals by enabling the athlete to "work through loss-related issues such as denial or feelings of despair, further refine a personal retirement story, and develop plans for future behavior" (p. 64). Empirical support for account-making has been provided by both Grove et al. (1998) and McKenna and Thomas (2007); though the latter warned that account-making may be problematic for those individuals (athletes) who hold a preference for negative introspection.

Several other investigations into the use of coping strategies have been conducted (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Baillie & Danish, 1992; Chambers, 2002; Grove et al., 1997; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stambulova et al., 2007). Many of the coping strategies aforementioned (e.g., acceptance, denial, expression of feelings) have garnered the attention of these researchers, with planning for retirement being the most commonly

discussed. Of these studies, however, the work of Grove et al. (1997) provided perhaps the most comprehensive examination in this subject area.

In their study, Grove et al. (1997) examined the use of coping strategies amongst 48 former elite-level athletes. These researchers found that athletes with a strong athletic identity tended to use avoidance-based copings strategies (e.g., denial, mental and behavioural disengagement) rather than problem-focused techniques. More generally, however, the most common coping strategies employed included: acceptance, positive reinterpretation, planning, active coping, mental disengagement, and seeking social support (Grove et al., 1997).

Social Resources

Where the individual athlete is unable to cope with a transition on his or her own, the support of others is often sought. Such support has the potential to provide an individual with the emotional, material and informational feedback required to ease the impact of an unanticipated or anticipated transition. For athletes, a support system may be derived from one's athletic involvement (e.g., fellow athletes, team personnel) and/or consist of family members and friends.

Pearson and Petitpas (1990) warned, however, that a support system should not be dependent upon nor consist of a dense social network. Dense social networks, described as groups having a large proportion of members who are in contact with one another, tend to be associated with member homogeneity and are more likely to cause skill-, information-, and opinion-restriction (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). Such restriction may cause an individual to limit, rather than broaden, alternatives for action upon retirement (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Remer, Tongate, & Watson, 1978). Consistent with

researchers' suggestions of broadening one's personal and social identities, athletes may too need to be cognizant of the social networks they maintain as well as the role of these networks in times of need.

Despite the potential consequences associated with dense social networks, social support has generally been found to assist athletes in their transition to a post-playing life. Werthner and Orlick (1986), for one, reported that former Canadian elite amateur athletes who received support from family and friends had an easier transition than those athletes who received less or no such support. Similarly, Svoboda and Vanek (1982) found social support to be one of the most important factors mediating one's sport career transition. Similar findings and positions have been reported by several other researchers as well (e.g., Chambers, 2002; Crook & Robertson, 1991; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Swain, 1991; Ungerleider, 1997; Wheeler et al., 1996).

Institutional Resources

For athletes in transition, support may also be sought from professional practitioners (e.g., psychologists) and/or member institutions (e.g., individual sport teams, player unions, career transition programs). Possible interventions provided by these institutional support sources range considerably and may consist of pre-, present-, and post-retirement exercises. Theorists have, however, commonly suggested that intervention is most effective when it begins prior to one's actual retirement (Baillie, 1992, 1993; Gorbett, 1985; Manion, 1976; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Supporting such a position, Baillie (1993) suggested for pre-retirement interventions to focus on specific issues related to functional adjustment and post-retirement programs to provide support for emotional concerns.

In the pre-retirement phase, Baillie (1993) added that the foci of intervention should be on:

> the development of new career options, of an attitude that promotes the opportunities of retirement rather than allowing for a purely loss-oriented attitude to occur, and on beginning to indicate to athletes the types of feelings that they or other athletes may experience, in an attempt to normalize or desensitize the difficult and sometimes painful experiences of the retiring athletes. (p. 407)

Given such remarks, it is possible to suggest that career planning assistance and/or counseling may be of particular benefit to those athletes wishing to address transition concerns prior to retirement. In regard to the structure of these interventions, several theorists have provided further detail.

Murphy (1994), for one, argued that career planning assistance is necessary for several retiring athletes because these individuals are often behind their demographic, non-sport counterparts in terms of traditional work experience. Given the precarious position that many athletes may come to be in, Murphy (1994) suggested that counsellors can assist athletes in: understanding the career process, developing job-relevant skills (as well as recognizing transferable skills that may have been developed through the course of a sport career), identifying personal career needs, identifying job-related opportunities, and setting career goals. In a similar vein, Taylor and Ogilvie (2001) noted the need for pre-retirement planning to consist of effective money management and long-term financial planning.

Where career planning assistance may provide an athlete with direction in terms of a professional venture, counseling holds the potential to ameliorate several of the

psychological and emotional pressures expectant with athletic retirement. In particular, Murphy (1994) suggested that individual counseling could be utilized to: expand the self-identity of an athlete (as athletes suffering from "identity foreclosure" are particularly susceptible to transition difficulties), provide emotional and social support, enhance the coping skills of the individual athlete, and assist the athlete in developing a greater sense of control over his or her own life. Manion (1976), alternatively, promoted the use of a group-based pre-retirement counseling model. In this model, and working as members of a supportive group, Manion (1976) believed individuals could better develop: self-diagnostic skills, communication and interpersonal relations skills, a sense of independence (rather than dependence), an awareness of both their present and potential life styles, skills in life planning, skills and attitudes for effective problem solving, attitudes supportive of decision making and action taking, and post-retirement options. Regardless of which model is ultimately utilized, it is most important to recognize the potential contribution of pre-retirement counseling to an athlete's transition experience, namely, the (anticipated) development of various individual personal skills (to be utilized in the course of a transition).

Intervention need not, however, be limited to the time preceding an individual's retirement. In fact, in the midst of, and following an athlete's retirement, institutional support may often be necessary. One model that attempts to link pre-retirement exercises to a more holistic intervention strategy has been termed life development intervention (Danish et al., 1993; Lavallee, 2005).

As Danish et al. (1993) explained, the life development intervention was formed in an effort to account for, and successfully manage continuous change and growth. To

manage change and promote growth within the individual, a variety of techniques and strategies are prescribed. Similar to the counseling interventions aforementioned, life development intervention calls for the use of "enhancement interventions" prior to an athlete's retirement (Danish et al., 1993, p. 367). Danish et al. (1993) explained that enhancement interventions "prepare athletes for future events by (a) helping them anticipate normative events, (b) assisting them to recognize how skills acquired in one domain apply to other life areas, and (c) teaching skills that enhance the ability to cope with future events" (p. 367). In the midst of a transition, the life development model intervention calls for what may otherwise be considered social support. Danish et al. (1993) added that counseling psychologists may provide support to athletes at this time through: "(a) organizing support groups for normative and paranormative transitional events; (b) assessing an individual's support needs and organizing resources; (c) identifying potential mentors and role models; (d) linking athletes to appropriate organizational resources; (e) encouraging athletes to provide support for others; and (f) advocacy" (p. 374). Finally, intervention may be provided to those athletes having difficulty with transition following retirement from sport; these interventions were termed "counseling strategies" (Danish et al., 1993, p. 374). In this phase of the intervention model, Danish et al. (1993) called for counselors to provide educational, rather than remedial, interventions that focused on assisting athletes in: gathering knowledge of one self, building coping skills, developing a risk-taking ability, and finding social support. Empirical support for the life development intervention model was provided by Lavallee (2005), who, in a study of retired male professional soccer players, found that the athletes

partaking in the life development intervention were better adjusted than those athletes in a control group.

In addition to the intervention strategies and models aforementioned, Taylor and Ogilvie (2001), and Lavallee and colleagues (Lavallee & Andersen, 2000; Lavallee et al., 2000; Wylleman et al., 2004) suggested that a variety of other intervention strategies may be implemented in the course of transition counseling. Taken together, the list of possible interventions includes such strategies as: cognitive restructuring (Beck, 1979; Garfield & Bergin, 1978), stress management (Meichenbaum & Jaremko, 1987), emotional expression (Yalom, 1980), information processing (account-making) (Harvey et al., 1990), mentoring, existential psychology, and stress innoculation (Lavallee & Andersen, 2000). To assist retiring athletes in their time of need, counselors must be versed in both these and career planning assistance techniques. Failure to have such qualification will likely be to the detriment of the individual athlete.

Organizational Effectiveness and Athletic Career Transition Programs

Taking into consideration not only the resources available to athletes but also the many factors affecting transition, difficulty in retirement may be predicted to occur with those athletes who

> (a) have most strongly and exclusively based their identity on athletic performance; (b) have the greatest gap between level of aspiration and level of ability; (c) have had the least prior experience with the same or similar transitions; (d) are limited in their general ability to adapt to change because of emotional and/or behavioral deficits; (e) are limited in their ability to form and maintain supportive relationships; and (f) must deal with the transition in a context (social

> and/or physical) lacking material and emotional resources that could be helpful. (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990, p. 9)

To assist individual athletes in avoiding a difficult retirement, several sport organizations have constructed transition programs (alternatively termed athlete life style programs). Varying in style, these athlete transition programs may be provided by either national sport governing bodies, National Olympic Committees, specific sport federations, academic institutions, or independent organizations with a link to sport (Anderson & Morris, 2000). Examples of such programs include: the Australian Athlete Career and Education program (managed by the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)), the Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre (managed by the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC)), the National Basketball Association's (NBA) Career and Education Program (Anderson & Morris, 2000), and the NHL's Life After Hockey program. However, to date, few studies (e.g., Drawer & Fuller, 2002; Gorely et al., 2001; Lavallee, Gorely, Lavallee, & Wylleman, 2001; North & Lavallee, 2004; Petitpas et al., 1992; Stankovich et al., 2001) have specifically examined the effect of athlete career programs on retirement adjustment; this despite a large number of studies having been done on the general topics of organizational effectiveness and athletic career transition.

Assessing Organizational Effectiveness

The construct of organizational effectiveness, in particular, has long been of interest to both theorists and practitioners alike. In the most basic sense, organizational effectiveness may be described as "the degree to which an organization realizes its goals" (Daft, 2007, p. 70). Several theorists have, however, found organizational effectiveness to

be a far more intricate construct than this simplistic definition would suggest (Cameron, 1978; Daft, 2007; Keeley, 1984; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). As Cameron (1978) noted,

> organizational effectiveness may be typified as being mutable (composed of different criteria at different life stages), comprehensive (including a multiplicity of dimensions), divergent (relating to different constituencies), transpositive (altering relevant criteria when different levels of analysis are used), and complex (having nonparsimonious relationships among dimensions). (p. 604)

Emblematic of Cameron's (1978) commentary, several approaches to measuring effectiveness exist.

Among the most traditional and widely used approaches is the goal approach. In this approach, effectiveness is defined in terms of how well an organization accomplishes its operative goals (Price, 1972). Operative goals are said to differ from official goals in that the former reflect the actual activities of the organization, whereas the latter are suggested as being more abstract and difficult to measure (Daft, 2007). This approach may be most beneficial to organizations where output has easily measurable performance criterions (e.g., profitability, market share, and return on investment) (Daft, 2007). Several issues do, however, undermine the utility of the goal approach (Cameron, 1981; Daft, 2007).

The first of these issues relates to goal multiplicity and an organization's attempts to achieve several, and sometimes conflicting goals (Daft, 2007). Highly complex and multi-level organizations may be particularly susceptible to this issue. Problems with the goal approach may also arise whenever subjective, rather than objective, evaluation criterions are utilized (Daft, 2007). Athlete career transition programs, for example, may

assess organizational effectiveness on their ability to assist and/or rehabilitate individual players, a criterion far more difficult to measure than, for example, revenues or market share. In addition to these issues, Cameron (1981) suggested that the goal approach may cause an organization to overlook effective areas of operations (i.e., areas outside the goal domain), and incorrectly attribute effectiveness in organizations that have goals that are too low, misplaced, or harmful.

As a consequence of such issues, alternatives to the goal approach have been promoted. One of these alternatives, the system resource (or resource-based) approach, was developed by Yuchtman and Seashore (1967) and focuses on the interaction of an organization with its environment. In this approach, organizational effectiveness is defined as "the ability of the organization, in either absolute or relative terms, to obtain scarce and valued resources and successfully integrate and manage them" (Daft, 2007, p. 73). According to the system resource approach, particular indicators of effectiveness include such dimensions as: bargaining position, the abilities of management to recognize and correctly interpret the real qualities of the external environment, the abilities of management to successfully incorporate tangible (e.g., supplies, people) and intangible (e.g., knowledge, culture) resources to the benefit of the organization, and an organization's ability to respond to environmental change (Daft, 2007). The value of the approach comes especially when other measures of effectiveness are not available or difficult to obtain. Much like the goal approach, however, the system resource approach is not without its detractors.

Price (1972), for one, criticized the approach for its inability to separate efficiency and effectiveness. Scott (1977) added that in focusing on an organization's ability to

acquire resources the approach overlooks the quality of the outputs ultimately produced. More recently, Priem and Butler (2001) challenged the approach for its assumptions of stability in not only the market place but also the value of resources.

Another measure of organizational effectiveness, the internal process approach, examines effectiveness in terms of an organization's internal health and efficiency (Steers, 1977). More specifically, the internal process approach accounts for organizational effectiveness by examining "the process by which organizations articulate preferences, perceive demands, and make decisions" (Cameron, 1978, p. 605). In this approach, indicators of organizational effectiveness include: a strong corporate culture; a positive work environment; unity, cooperation, trust, and communication amongst and between employees and management; and rewards for those managers who encourage development, growth, performance and effective team work in their subordinates (Cunningham, 1977; Daft, 2007). The approach has been suggested to have utility, in that internal harmony is generally perceived as being beneficial, rather than detrimental, to an organization's success (Daft, 2007). However, as may be expected, criticisms regarding the internal process approach do exist.

Similar to Scott's (1977) criticism of the system resource approach, Campbell (1977) found the internal process approach to overlook and undervalue the results produced by the means of activity. Campbell's (1977) criticism of the approach may become particularly elucidated when taking into consideration Cameron's (1980) apt example of the New York Yankees:

> Lack of team discipline, fights among players and between players and coaches, threatened firings, turnover in key personnel, and lack of cohesion seemed to be

> the defining characteristics of that organization during the 1977 and 1978 baseball seasons. Yet the Yankees were the most effective team in baseball in terms of goal accomplishment; they won the World Series both years. (p. 69)

In addition, the approach has been criticized for its inherent disregard of environmental factors (Daft, 2007). This, coupled with the complexity involved in objectively measuring internal processes, has led several theorists to question the approach's ability to accurately assess organizational effectiveness (Cameron, 1980; Campbell, 1977; Daft, 2007; Dornbusch & Scott, 1975).

Individually, the approaches described provide but a limited view of an organization. Recognizing this limitation, theorists have since devised alternative, integrative approaches to measuring organizational effectiveness. Two of these approaches in particular have garnered a great deal of regard: the stakeholder approach (also called the constituency approach) and the competing values approach (Daft, 1998).

The first of these two approaches, the stakeholder approach, assesses effectiveness in terms of an organization's ability to meet and satisfy the needs and priorities of key constituencies (Connolly, Conlon, & Deutsch, 1980). These key constituents, or stakeholders, may include any individual or group with a tie (financial or otherwise) to an organization (Connolly et al., 1980). Stakeholders in a professional sport franchise, for example, may include: ownership, fans, employees, creditors, suppliers, the community at large, and the government. The strength of the stakeholder approach comes primarily in its ability to provide a holistic perspective of organizational effectiveness; it assumes effectiveness to be a complex, multidimensional concept that has no single measure (Daft, 1998). It is this strength that has likely led many sport management

researchers to readily adopt the approach (e.g., Papadimitriou & Taylor, 2000; Trail & Chelladurai, 2000; Wolfe, Hoeber, & Babiak, 2002).

An alternative integrative approach, the competing values approach, was provided by Quinn and Rohrbaugh in 1983. The approach is based on the hypothesis that within organizations there exist tensions between underlying value dimensions (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). As the pair of researchers explain:

> criteria of organizational effectiveness can be sorted according to three axes or values. The first value dimension is related to organizational focus, from an internal, micro emphasis on the well-being and development of people in the organization to an external, macro emphasis on the well-being and development of the organization itself. The second value dimension is related to organizational structure, from an emphasis on stability to an emphasis on flexibility. The third value dimension is related to organizational means and ends, from an emphasis on important processes (e.g., planning and goal setting) to an emphasis on final outcomes (e.g., productivity). (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983, p. 369)

A graphic reproduction of Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) spatial model is provided as Figure 1. As the figure depicts, the interaction between the value dimensions produces four models of organizational effectiveness: the open systems model; the rational goal model; the internal process model; and the human relations model.

In the first of these middle range models, the open systems model, emphasis is placed on maintaining an external focus and a flexible structure (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Organizations and management groups operating within this model stress growth and resource acquisition; activities accomplished through such sub-goals as flexibility,

readiness, and positive external evaluations (Daft, 2007; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). In this way (i.e., with these goals), the open system model is similar to systems resource approach aforementioned.

In the rational goal model, management values centre on structural control and an external focus (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Primary goals of this model include productivity, efficiency, and profit (Daft, 2007). To facilitate the achievement of these goals, sub-goals of internal planning and goal setting are readily promoted (Daft, 2007; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Similar to the relationship between the open system model and system resource approach, the rational goal model too shares similarities to an aforementioned approach, the goal approach.

The third of four middle range models, the internal process model, maintains two primary values: internal focus and structural control (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Organizations reflective of the internal process model emphasize stability and equilibrium (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Sub-goals of this model include information management (i.e., mechanisms for efficient communication) and coordination in decision making (Daft, 2007; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Although similar in some respects to the internal process approach aforementioned, the internal process model devised by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) is less concerned with human resources than with other internal processes that lead to efficiency (Daft, 2007).

The final model, the human relations model, emphasizes an internal focus and a flexible structure (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Organizations and management groups reflective of this model are primarily concerned with the development of human resources (Daft, 2007). To achieve this primary goal, management strives to achieve

several sub-goals, including: cohesion, morale, and the provision of training opportunities (Daft, 2007; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983).

Collectively, the competing values model provides two valuable contributions for researchers (Daft, 2007). First, it synthesizes several diverse concepts of effectiveness into a single perspective (Daft, 2007). Second, the model's depiction of effectiveness criteria as competing management values frames organizational effectiveness as a complex and multi-faceted concept (Daft, 2007).

Studies of Athletic Career Transition Programs

The concept of organizational effectiveness has not, however, received significant attention from those researchers interested in athletic career transitions. Although studies regarding athletic career transitions are numerous, few have specifically focused on existent transition programs. Among the earliest works with a regard for these programs is that of Blann and Zaichkowsky (1986).

Blann and Zaichkowsky (1986), as a part of their research, examined the career needs of professional hockey players. The pair of researchers utilized the Professional Athletes Career Transition Inventory and obtained data from 117 current (at the time of the study) NHL players. Of those surveyed for the purposes of the study, 85% believed it was important for help to be provided in planning for post-athletic careers (Blann & Zaichkowsky, 1986). Further to this, it was suggested that programs should assist players in: relating personal strengths, interests and skills to potential careers; developing and carrying out education and career plans; and understanding and relating specific education, certification, licensing and other training programs to appropriate careers (Blann & Zaichkowsky, 1986). With 53% of the players acknowledging that they had yet

to plan for a post-athletic career, it would appear that these programs would have been of great interest and utility (Blann & Zaichkowsky, 1986).

In the same year, a more thorough analysis of professional hockey players' career needs was conducted by the NHLPA. Baillie and Danish (1992) reported some of the highlights of the players' association's findings:

> in their 1986 survey of the membership of NHLPA (McFadden & Tucker, personal communication, 1986), a questionnaire was administered to 274 players and 90 wives or girlfriends who attended career-planning seminars. In this group, 93% of the players and 91% of the wives or girlfriends felt that it was very important to plan for retirement from professional hockey; the remaining percentages felt that it was moderately important.... Some 58% of the players reported taking concrete steps to prepare for a posthockey career; 83% expressed that they had not devoted enough time and energy to such planning. Only 37% of the players felt that it was important to start planning for retirement from hockey prior to entry into the NHL. An additional 49% thought it was important that such planning start during the first half of their NHL careers. With respect to responsibility for the provision and funding of the programs the players had indicated were of value to them, 61% of the players suggested that league and NHLPA jointly should organize and fund the seminars; 28% felt that it was the player's own responsibility. (pp. 85-86)

Taken together, the works of Blann and Zaichkowsky (1986) and McFadden and Tucker (1986, as cited in Baillie & Danish (1992)) provided an early indication of players' interest in a sustainable athlete transition program. Available critical analysis of a

possible program was, however, limited but to a single comment by Baillie and Danish (1992):

> although the studies of Blann and Zaichkowsky (1986) and McFadden and Tucker are an exceedingly useful look at the present attitudes toward retirement among active players in the NHL, the primary focus of their work is on the career transition issues of leaving sports and finding a new occupation, establishing financial security, and making appropriate life-style adjustments. Because of the mandate given by the NHLPA, emotional and psychological support during the transition is of lesser importance than are these more concrete factors. (p. 86)

Following the publication of Baillie and Danish's (1992) work, no further analysis of NHL/NHLPA career transition interventions was made until 2002.

It was in this year that Chambers (2002) produced her doctoral dissertation, titled *Adjustment to Career Termination in Professional Hockey Players*. Although the focus of Chambers' (2002) research was on the factors affecting adjustment, an investigation into the use of career transition interventions was conducted. In summarizing her findings, Chambers (2002) provided the following pertinent information:

> before their retirement, 7.7% of players attended seminars focused on adjustment to retirement issues; 97.3% felt that it was important that these seminars be offered before retirement. The majority (74.4%) felt that the NHLPA should be responsible for arranging pre-retirement seminars with a minority reporting that the individual teams (19%), individual players (16.7%), or NHL (19%) should be responsible for arranging pre-retirement seminars. The majority (63.5%) felt that seminars should be offered during the off-season. The majority (92.2%) of

> respondents were not offered information about retirement programs, seminars or workshops at the time of their retirement. When these services had been offered, 66.7% of retired players attended. The majority (92.4%) of retired players responded that retirement services should be offered to players at the time of retirement from professional hockey. (pp. 57-58)

Coupled with the findings that 12.5% of former players experienced considerable difficulty with emotional adjustment, and 5.1% expressed problems related to functional adjustment, Chambers' (2002) research supported the notion that a career transition program for this group of athletes may be beneficial. Unfortunately, with the Life After Hockey program having begun operations in the same year Chambers' (2002) work was produced, an accurate depiction and analysis of the NHL's current career transition program is unavailable.

Beyond the aforementioned works pertaining to the NHL and its alumni, only one other published study has had the particular purpose of investigating a professional sport league's career transition offerings, that being the work of Drawer and Fuller (2002). In their study, Drawer and Fuller (2002) examined the perceptions of retired soccer players in regard to the quality of support services offered prior to and following athletic retirement. Surveying 185 former players, the researchers found that the Professional Footballers' Association provided significantly more help and advice to retired players on medical, financial, career, and educational matters than any other related organization (Drawer & Fuller, 2002). The researchers also found that while many respondents were satisfied with the provision of medical support, several were generally less satisfied with the provision of sport science and education/welfare support (respondents who had retired

due to injury were more dissatisfied with the provision of all services) (Drawer & Fuller, 2002).

Other studies of career transition programs have largely focused on the interventions available for elite amateur athletes (e.g., Lavallee et al., 2001; North & Lavallee, 2004; Petitpas et al., 1992; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Stankovich et al., 2001). The most notable of these works are those of Petitpas et al. (1992) and Sinclair and Orlick (1993). Examining the USOC Career Assistance Program for Athletes, Petitpas et al. (1992) provided a detailed outline of the steps involved in planning the program, an overview of the workshops available to athletes, an evaluation of these workshops, and, suggestions for the program's counselors. The researchers found that the workshops (which dealt with such topics as managing emotional and social transitions, developing coping skills, and preparing for a career) were generally well received by the participants (98% of the 142 athletes surveyed described themselves as being either satisfied (26%) or very satisfied (72%) with the experience). Implications for counselors accounted for such items as: the application of the life span development model, the structure of individual workshops, and commonly voiced transition concerns (Petitpas et al., 1992). The greatest utility, or benefit, of Petitpas et al.'s (1992) work to the current study is in its structure and depth of examination; in these ways it may act as an exemplar from which to follow.

Insight into the Canadian equivalent of the USOC Career Assistance Program for Athletes, the Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre, was provided by Sinclair and Orlick in 1993. In their study, Sinclair and Orlick (1993) investigated: the degree to which athletes utilized the services provided by the Career Centre, the types of services in which athletes would be most interested, athletes' level of comfort in seeking assistance,

and general perceptions on the athletic career transition process. The pair of researchers found that of the 199 retired athletes surveyed approximately 73% had not utilized the services provided (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Reasons cited for not using the program's services included: a lack of need/desire (31%), a lack of awareness (of the Career Centre's existence) (16%), a perceived lack of utility in individual services (9%), and a lack of awareness regarding the specific services available (as opposed to the program in general) (9%) (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). When asked about the types of services that would be beneficial in the periods prior to and during transition, athletes suggested the following:

> (a) financial assistance (89%), (b) information on job and educational opportunities (82%), (c) readings on how other athletes have dealt with retirement (76%), (d) opportunities to learn to transfer one's mental skills to a new career or interest (74%), (e) opportunities to help focus on finding a new career or interest (74%), (f) physiological and dietary detraining program (63%), (g) seminars with other retired athletes (62%), and (h) suggestions to help the athlete feel more confident or competent in new surroundings (62%). (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993, p. 145)

In examining athletes' interests in utilizing the services of the Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre, Sinclair and Orlick (1993) demonstrated that organizational effectiveness may consider not only for participants' satisfaction after the fact, as Petitpas et al. (1992) had examined, but also a program's ability to attract potential users.

Two other studies have similarly framed organizational effectiveness in terms of a program's potential users (Gorely et al., 2001; Lavallee et al., 2001; North & Lavallee,

2004). In the first of these two studies, Gorely et al. (2001) investigated the potential users of the Australian Athlete Career and Education program. The study, which was comprised of 878 active elite athletes (across 48 sports, at the time of the study), found that only 0.7% of the sample had utilized any of the available career transition services; this despite more than 86% of the sample reporting an awareness of the program (Gorely et al., 2001; Lavallee et al., 2001). The researchers ultimately found the low usage rates of career transition services to be representative of the sample's general lack of regard for issues related to retirement (Gorely et al., 2001; Lavallee et al., 2001). A similar lack of regard among active elite athletes was found in North and Lavallee's (2004) investigation of potential users of career transition programs in the United Kingdom.

The present study attempted to add to these existing works of athletic career transition and organizational effectiveness by examining a program that had previously been ignored by researchers, the Life After Hockey program. Loosely framed by the stakeholder approach to assessing organizational effectiveness, the study sought out the perspectives of both the program's directors and former users. In examining the perspectives of each, a comprehensive understanding of both athletic career transition and program effectiveness could be attained.

Chapter Three - Methods

In addressing the research questions of this study, both a constructivist epistemology and an interpretive framework were adopted. Willis (2007) described epistemologies as being "concerned with what we can know about reality (however that is defined) and how we can know it" (p. 10). Crotty (1998) suggested that epistemologies may generally fall into one of three categories: objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism. With the objectivist epistemology, meaning and reality are believed to exist separate from human consciousness (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism, conversely, maintains that truth and meaning may only be discerned through interactions in a social world (Crotty, 1998). Where constructionism involves the interplay between subject and object in creating meaning and truth, subjectivism purports that meaning is imposed on the object by the subject (Crotty, 1998). Rejecting the tenets of objectivist and subjectivist epistemologies, this study constructed meaning and truth, as they pertain to the research questions, through several interactions (between the researcher and participants).

The adoption of a constructivist epistemology also underpins the study's position within the interpretive paradigm. Neuman (2003) defined a paradigm as a "basic orientation to theory and research" (p. 70). Sparkes (1992) added that the adoption of a particular paradigm "literally permeates every act even tangentially associated with inquiry, such that any consideration even remotely attached to inquiry processes demands rethinking to bring decisions into line with the world view embodied in the paradigm itself" (p. 12). Much like epistemologies, researchers have a variety of paradigms to choose from, including: the aforementioned interpretivism, positivism, post-positivism,

critical theory, and post-modernism (Neuman, 2003). Most ongoing social research is based in either interpretivism or positivism (Neuman, 2003). The two paradigms are, however, diametrically opposed in various assumptions and commitments (Creswell, 2003; Sparkes, 1992). Table 1 provides distinctions between the two.

The goals of interpretive research, in particular, are to develop an understanding of social life, and to discover how people construct meaning in a variety of settings (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burrell & Morgan, 1979). In contrast to positivism's underlying assumption, that reality exists separate from individual influence, interpretive social science holds that reality is largely what people perceive it to be (Neuman, 2003). To discern the unique and contextualized nature of individual lives, interpretive researchers often stray from using the a priori hypotheses, theories, and data collection methods (e.g., questionnaires, quantitative evaluations) espoused by positivists. As Neuman (2003) explained,

> interpretive researchers want to discover what actions mean to the people who engage in them. It makes little sense to try to deduce social life from abstract, logical theories that may not relate to the feelings and experiences of ordinary people. People have their own reasons for their actions, and researchers need to learn the reasons people use. Individual motives are crucial to consider even if they are irrational, carry deep emotions, and contain false facts and prejudices. (pp. 77-78)

Interpretive researchers are therefore asked to examine individual differences in action and meaning while taking into account the context of a specific person's lived experience (Denzin, 1989; Schwandt, 2000).

Consistent with the study's position within the interpretive paradigm, the lived experiences of retired professional hockey players were perceived to be inherently unique and individually significant. Although similarities across retired athlete populations do exist, retired professional hockey players cannot be said to represent all athletes, nor can all other athletes be described as being representative of retired professional hockey players. Given such a position, an understanding of the unique lived experiences of individual players was thought to be best realized through the use of inductive reasoning and an interpretive research approach.

One approach in particular, case study, framed this study's design. Rossman and Rallis (2003) defined case studies as "in-depth and detailed explorations of single examples (an event, process, organization, group, or individual) that are an instance drawn from a class of similar phenomena" (p. 104). Yin (2003) added that "the case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context" (p. 4). In the present example, the object of study (i.e., the case) was athletic career transition (among former professional hockey players, and more specifically, former Life After Hockey program participants). Within this investigation there also existed several nested and layered cases (e.g., factors and resources affecting quality of transition, evaluations of individual program workshops). As a whole, the approach provided the flexibility required to gather a comprehensive understanding of: athletic career transition, the activities and services of the Life After Hockey program, as well as the effect of the program on former professional hockey players (i.e., the organization's perceived effectiveness).

The Life After Hockey Program

Prior to assessing the effects and effectiveness of the Life After Hockey program, a description of its services and general processes had to be generated. Consistent with the case study research genre, several data collection methods were utilized in producing, what Patton (2002) termed as, the "bedrock" for program evaluation (p. 438). Among these methods were: interviews, document analysis, and participant observations.

Detailed insights into the program came initially as a result of a single interview conducted with Dr. Dale Jasinski, the program's Executive Director, and Mr. Duncan Fletcher, the program's Manager.[2] For the purpose of the interview, a guide (i.e., a list of questions or issues to be explored) was utilized. Structured in such a manner as to consider for both thematic (i.e., having relevancy to the research theme) and dynamic (i.e., promoting positive interpersonal dynamics for the interview process itself) dimensions (Kvale, 1996), the guide asked the two participants to respond to the following questions/instructions:

- How did the Life After Hockey program come into existence?
- What are the goals of the program?
- Who is eligible to participate?
- How are these individuals informed of the program and its services?
- Describe the services provided by the Life After Hockey program.

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[2] Although the format of the interview (with both representatives being present) may not have been ideal, it was efficient, allowing for a significant exchange of information. Notable issues arising as a result of this interview format can be described as being equality- or transparency-based in nature, where the perspectives of an individual participant may not have been fully realized (due to any number of factors, including an imbalance in power, the responses provided by the other participant, or the cues for responses provided by the researcher).

- How did these services come to be chosen for provision?
- How is the program assessed?
- How do you view the current state of the program?

Several probing, follow-up questions were also asked as a part of the interview process, so as to elicit a richer, more detailed account of the program.

The face-to-face interview with the two program representatives was conducted on April 20, 2009 and ran 176 minutes in length. The interview was recorded, transcribed, and returned to the two participants for verification. No corrections to the original transcript were requested by either participant. The transcript ultimately produced 62 single-spaced pages of data (to be used for analysis).

Further information pertaining to the program and its activities was gleaned through document analysis. As suggested by Caulley (1983) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), document analysis allowed for both the investigation of otherwise unattainable retrospective information, and the corroboration of data (received from other sources). Documents attained from the program thus acted not only as an additional data source but also as a measure for data triangulation. Among the documents examined were: workshop syllabi, schedules, and assignments; and support materials (e.g., texts used by program participants).

To organize and report the qualitative data collected from documents, a processes-based analytical framework was applied. Patton (2002) described such a framework as being concerned with organizing data so as to illuminate important program processes (e.g., recruitment, socialization, decision making, and communication). In regards to the present study, the processes of particular interest included the systems (e.g., workshops,

seminars, educational modules) and methods (for presenting information, socialization, skill-learning) used by the Life After Hockey program in assisting athletes.

A further understanding of the services provided by the program was gained through participant observations. In conducting such observations, the researcher typically joins a culture, becomes immersed in its daily activities, and experiences life as the participants do (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). As access to individual workshops was denied, observation was limited to being non-participatory (a term provided by Spradley (1980) to denote instances where "the observer has no involvement with the people or activities studied" (p. 59)) in nature. Non-participatory observation was conducted by viewing video taped sessions involving participants at previous workshops.

In the course of viewing two taped sessions, field notes (concise, written memos) were generated. These field notes were used to assist in recalling information pertaining to: the spatial setting, participants or actors, activities being carried out, objects within the setting, key events, time, goals, and feelings (Krane & Baird, 2005; Spradley, 1980). The field notes were ultimately translated into a research log, a precise and detailed record of the research setting and all interactions (Krane & Baird, 2005). The research log represented the third source of data utilized in providing a detailed and exhaustive review of the program's operations.

Lived Experiences of Retired Professional Hockey Players

After coming to a greater understanding of the program's operations, the study moved to a second phase of inquiry. In this phase, retired professional hockey players were sought out to not only provide a personally meaningful review of their athletic career transitions, but also to assist the researcher in realizing how these transitions were

affected by the Life After Hockey program. To take part in this phase of the study, individuals must have: played in the NHL (at some point in their athletic careers), retired from professional hockey, and used some service provided by the Life After Hockey program. Ineligible to participate in the study were active NHL players, as well as former NHL players now playing professionally in another league (e.g., American Hockey League (AHL), Kontinental Hockey League (KHL)) (given a likely inability to speak to personal experiences of retiring from professional hockey).

Initially, the process of identifying and selecting study participants was to be based on a combination of maximum variation and criterion sampling techniques (Patton, 2002). Maximum variation sampling, as Patton (2002) explained, "aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation" (pp. 234-235). Criterion sampling, alternatively, calls for researchers to "review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (Patton, 2002, p. 238). The adoption of these sampling techniques was meant to encourage analysis related to such factors as: era of play, length of career, and workshop(s) attended/service(s) utilized. The Life After Hockey program, in accordance with the NHL Alumni Association, did not however make available a list of former program participants (nor provide any related contact information). Given such limitations, the proposed sampling techniques were abandoned, and a form of convenience sampling was adopted.[3]

Lacking sufficient information regarding the population of interest, a list of potential participants (i.e., former program participants) was initially constructed from documents available in the public domain. When accounting for the identities of former

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[3] Contrary to Patton's (2002) description of convenience sampling, the cases selected for this study were neither "easy to access" nor "inexpensive to study" (p. 242).

program participants discovered through other means (e.g., in discussions with study participants), the known population grew to include some 50 individuals (in a total population of more than 100). Ultimately, these individuals represented the population available for study.

Recruitment of these individuals for participation in the study was conducted through a variety of means, including: electronic mail (e-mail) marketing, direct mail, and telemarketing. Initial recruitment efforts began in May 2009 and were led by the Life After Hockey program. E-mails and letters sent out by the program, on behalf of the researcher, resulted in two responses from prospective participants (well short of the 15 to 18 participants desired). Given the lack of responses, the researcher subsequently contacted potential participants via e-mail and/or telephone (beginning in June 2009). Secondary marketing attempts (i.e., those made by the researcher) resulted in 18 more prospective participants. In all, 20 former Life After Hockey program participants agreed to take part in a single semi-structured, in-depth interview, with 17 ultimately doing so (scheduling conflicts prevented the other three interviews from occurring). A biographical sketch of these 17, as a group, is provided in Appendix.

Each of the 17 interviews were conducted at a mutually agreed upon location, typically in or near the participant's permanent place of residence.[4] Prior to the start of each interview, the participant was reminded of the study's purpose, informed of the ethical standards to be maintained by the researcher, and asked to a sign a form of consent. As in the previous phase of the study, an interview guide (one accounting for both thematic and dynamic dimensions; Kvale, 1996) was utilized. The guide provided

[4] Interviews took place in six distinct regions (i.e., provinces/states) of North America.

individual participants with the opportunity to describe their lived experiences (as retired professional hockey players) in such a manner that was meaningful to them. The particular questions/instructions asked of participants in this phase of the study included:

- Prior to becoming a professional athlete, what role did hockey play in your life?
- Describe for me your transition to playing professional hockey.
- Describe for me what your life was like as a professional hockey player.
- What led you to retire from professional hockey?
- How prepared were you for retirement?
- Describe for me what life was like in the months and year immediately following your retirement from professional hockey.

Responses from participants, in this regard, provided not only insight into the factors/resources aiding and impeding a successful transition, but also potential reasons for participation in the Life After Hockey program.

The Effectiveness of the Life After Hockey Program

In the course of these same interviews, retired professional hockey players were asked to speak to their experiences with the Life After Hockey program. Participants' perspectives of the program were central in framing this study's description and evaluation of effectiveness. Further clarification to this description may be realized when incorporating the works of Cameron (1980), Cameron and Whetten (1983), Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), and Zammuto (1984).

As previously described, the concept of organizational effectiveness is one characterized by intricacy and divergent perspectives. Despite such complexity, at least

one method for developing structure and meaning in studies of organizational effectiveness is available. Cameron (1980) and Cameron and Whetten (1983), in particular, proposed that studies of organizational effectiveness may be guided by six critical questions. These six questions are:

1. What domain of activity (e.g., internal versus external) is of interest?
2. Whose perspective, or which constituency's point of view is being considered?
3. What level of analysis is being used (e.g., individual versus subunit versus organization)?
4. What time frame is being employed?
5. What type of data are to be used?
6. What referent is being employed (e.g., comparable organization, performance markers, goals, traits)? (Cameron, 1980)

The researchers suggested that studies of organizational effectiveness may be improved by incorporating these questions into the study's design (Cameron, 1980; Cameron & Whetten, 1983).

The works of Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) and Zammuto (1984) suggested that one final point may also be worthy of consideration in studies of organizational effectiveness, values. Given the perception of effectiveness as a value-based judgement, Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) and Zammuto (1984) believed that this characteristic also required consideration. As values may differ across constituencies (or stakeholders), so too may perceptions of effectiveness.

For the purposes of this study, effectiveness was viewed as being tied to the state of the individual program participant. As such, the program activities of primary interest included those which attempted to assist athletes in their transition to a post-playing life (e.g., services, workshops). Consistent with the athlete's centrality in this study's conceptualization of organizational effectiveness, the perspectives and values of participants were held in worth above all others. The program's ability to meet the needs of its participants thus acted as the referent. In these ways, the interests and well-being of the athlete were judged to be the critical factors in assessing program effectiveness.

To gather a further appreciation of the athletes' experiences prior to, during, and following participation in the Life After Hockey program, research participants were asked a series of questions/instructions as a part of the interview guide. The particular questions/instructions asked of participants for this component of the study included:

- What led you to participate in the Life After Hockey program?
- Describe for me the type of assistance the program attempted to provide you.
- How has participating in the Life After Hockey program affected your life?
- Given your personal experiences with both retirement and the Life After Hockey program, are there any suggestions you would have for the program? For today's players?
- Is there anything else that we have not as of yet covered that would allow me to better understand your experiences with either retirement or the Life After Hockey program?

Taking into account these questions, as well as those aforementioned, a total of 11 questions made up the interview guide. As with the preceding interview (with program staff), probing and follow-up questions were commonly asked where necessary.

The 17 interviews with former program participants were conducted between June 23 and November 19, 2009, and ranged in length from 53 to 137 minutes (with an average length of approximately 99 minutes). Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and returned to the respective participant for verification. Of the 17 participants, one replied to note a necessary correction (a miswritten financial figure related to charitable work). These transcripts ultimately represented 411 single-spaced pages of data to be used for analysis.

Analysis

Data analysis was inductive (i.e., findings related to retirement and organizational effectiveness were not based on a priori theory-driven hypotheses but on patterns and themes uncovered in the data) and began shortly after the completion of the first interview. Involved in such analysis was an iterative process of: conducting, transcribing, verifying, and interpreting interviews; pursuing new insights; collecting additional data; and challenging, rejecting, affirming, and refining emerging themes. Although data analysis was relatively continuous, the process of data coding only began after the completion of the final interview.

Incorporating qualitative research strategies promoted by both Strauss (1987) and Patton (2002), several rounds of data coding were undertaken. Sensitizing concepts (e.g., causes of retirement, factors affecting the transition process, the effect of the Life After Hockey program) were incorporated to guide this process. The particular codes and

themes utilized were inspired either by the existent retirement literature or the responses of participants (i.e., in vivo codes). Data coding ultimately allowed for both a reduction in the amount of data and the categorization of that which remained into meaningful themes.

Throughout this coding process, notes and memos regarding interesting insights were maintained. These notes and memos allowed for conclusions to be examined and then refined. In its entirety, the process aforementioned mirrors both the simultaneous data collection and analysis of Merriam's (2001) and Rossman and Rallis's (2003) open-ended analysis.

The results presented hereafter loosely follow a form of meaning condensation, an approach to interview analysis that "entails an abridgement of the meanings expressed by the interviewees into shorter formulations" (Kvale, 1996, p. 192).[5] Utilizing this approach, the interview text was condensed in such a manner as to provide an organized and meaningful review of the sample's life experiences (the focus of which was less in interpretation and more in description). In an effort to protect participant confidentiality, the text was also edited in such a manner so as to not disclose any information (e.g., names, team names) that may be directly attributable to the individual speaker.

Trustworthiness

To ensure that the results are both consistent and representative of the data collected, several techniques for establishing trustworthiness were adopted. As Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) noted, "the basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an

[5] The presentation format strays from Kvale's (1996) conceptualization of meaning condensation in that many of the "natural meaning units" (i.e., participants' quotations) have been made readily available.

inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" Within the conventional positivistic paradigm, there exist several criteria for trustworthiness, including: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Unfortunately (and consistent with the divide between interpretivism and positivism), these criteria are less appropriate in studies involving qualitative methodologies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sparkes, 1998). Recognizing such a discontinuity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed a parallel set of trustworthiness criteria for qualitative researchers. These criteria included: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. A summary of the techniques that may be used to establish trustworthiness, in respect to each of these criteria, is available in Table 2.

Criticisms related to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) parallel perspective have, however, been put forth (e.g., Gallagher, 1995; Silverman, 1993; Smith, 1984, 1988, 1990; Sparkes, 1998). Sparkes (1998), for example, noted that the perspective lacked both an explicit rationale for the adoption of individual techniques, and sufficient operational definitions. Gallagher (1995) and Silverman (1993), alternatively, questioned member checking as a method for verifying credibility. Gallagher (1995), in particular, suggested that in undertaking member checking, participants could become the possessors of truth; a conclusion that is inconsistent with the interpretive assumption of multiple truths and/or realities. Smith (1984, 1988, 1990) too supported such contentions and found Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work to have several foundational contradictions. Acknowledging such limitations, Sparkes (1998) suggested that a set of flexible criteria (such as authenticity, fidelity, and believability) may best suit qualitative researchers.

Without a prescribed set of criteria to meet, the study attempted to establish trustworthiness by heeding the insights of the theorists aforementioned. The use of data triangulation and peer debriefing, for example, was done, in part, to increase the likelihood of establishing credibility (or believability). Prolonged involvement with the phenomenon of interest (through several lengthy interviews) allowed for the realization of nuances in participants' experiences. The use of detailed, rich descriptions in reporting should assist transferability. To assist in meeting what Lincoln and Guba (1985) described as dependability and confirmability, a detailed set of research notes were maintained (in this way, others may review the work and understand the process by which conclusions were achieved). Finally, the study attempted to adhere to Sparkes's (1998) call for authenticity, a set of actions that would be considered to be consistent with the interpretive research paradigm. The collective use of these strategies represented a conscious attempt to reaffirm the meaning and value of the results presented hereafter.

Chapter Four - Results and Discussion

The Participants and Their Lives in Hockey

Having played hockey in different eras, locations, and for varying lengths of time, the 17 study participants provided a rather diverse set of lived experiences. On average, the participants played approximately 377 regular season NHL games over the course of their careers. Four participants were also members of the World Hockey Association (WHA), and played, on average, 176 regular season games in the league. The participants' careers in elite professional hockey (i.e., considering for play in either the NHL or WHA, and not any other league[6]) ranged in length from four to 14 seasons, and could be dated as far back as to the 1960s and as recently as to the new millennium.[7] As several participants explained, the typical path to playing elite professional hockey was neither brief, nor direct, and often began at an early age.

Life Preceding Elite Professional Hockey (NHL / WHA)

For a number of participants, the aforementioned path began as a childhood dream. Seven participants, in particular, indicated a near-life long aspiration of playing hockey professionally, and more specifically of playing in the NHL. Participant 06, for example, spoke of such a dream in relation to the role that hockey played early in his life:

> It was an opportunity to get together and be a part of a team. It was also an opportunity to have a certain amount of independence. It was great conditioning. It was a fantastic way to burn off steam. It was just absolutely so much fun....

---

[6] Although a higher degree of regard for the NHL seemed to exist (compared to the WHA), participants rarely spoke of distinguishable differences between the two leagues (other than, perhaps, monetary). Given such consistency, both leagues were considered as being "elite."

[7] The NHL careers, in particular, ranged in length from two to 13 seasons.

> What hockey also did, at that time, is it helped give a young man a dream, and a focus. Like when I do public speaking I talk a lot of times about having a dream, and it seems, at that time, there was this dream that there was a possibility to maybe someday be able to play on TV, and be a part of an NHL team. So it seemed to be a focus, not only with myself, but with my family also, around creating the possibilities, and the opportunities to continue to pursue that.

The following quotations further illustrate such aspirations:

> When I was growing up - four, five, six, seven years old - I always knew I was going to play hockey for a living. Geez, I guess at about 10 years old I was a big fan of the Bruins and I just had it in my mind that I was going to play hockey in Boston; that was just something that I was going to do.
>
> - Participant 03

> From the time I was old enough to start playing hockey, I wanted to play in the NHL. That was kind of my sole purpose in life. I think most Canadian kids think that they're going to become, or want to be, an NHL player one day - that's their dream. I was just lucky, obviously, to live my dream of making it to the National Hockey League, and playing pro hockey for a long time.
>
> - Participant 14

While the career path for some individuals was quite clearly defined, for others it was less palpable. Unaware of their own potential in the sport or the prospects of playing professionally, several (n = 8) participants described their eventual careers as being relatively unanticipated. Two former goaltenders, for example, described the unanticipated nature of their careers:

> Hockey was a passion in my life, but it wasn't really a practical thing. Like when I played Junior I was a decent player, but I wasn't an all-star by any stretch, and so when I was 18, 19 years of age I didn't think of becoming a pro hockey player. I wanted to be a teacher, so I went to teacher's college… So hockey was an interest and a passion, but there was no way it was going to be a career. Then what happened was just through a whole bunch of fluky things I ended up playing some games (professionally)...
>
> - Participant 01

> I never thought of it (playing professionally) before (until learning of his status as a highly regarded prospect). For me, it was always just getting to school. My brother didn't play pro. He got his masters in four years so that's really all I was focused on. Then pro came along. It was probably a good thing I never thought about it. It just kind of happened.
>
> - Participant 11

Sharing similarities in this one regard, the goaltenders represent two divergent tracks participants may have taken in reaching either in the NHL or the WHA (whereas Participant 01 played Major Junior hockey in Canada and was not drafted, Participant 11 played Collegiate hockey in America and was drafted).

Of the 17 participants, 11 played (what would be considered today as) Major Junior hockey in Canada prior to the start of their professional careers.[8] Of the six remaining participants, five played Collegiate hockey in America (more specifically, in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)), and one played (what would be

[8] Major Junior hockey in Canada is the highest level of competition available for amateur players aged 16 to 20.

considered today as) Tier Two Junior A hockey in Canada. Thirteen of the 17 participants were drafted by NHL teams, and four were drafted into both the NHL and the WHA. The NHL draft positions of the participants ranged considerably, with four individuals having been chosen in the first round, three in rounds two to three, and another six in later rounds. The WHA draft positions of the four participants were similarly dispersed, with each of the participants having been chosen in a different round. In all, eight participants made the transition directly from amateur to elite professional hockey, with five having done so to the NHL and three to the WHA. For four of these eight individuals, a stretch of time in some minor league came within a season of playing at the highest level of hockey possible. As was more typically the case, playing minor professional hockey often represented a prerequisite to an elite professional career.

In all, nine of the 17 participants began their professional hockey careers in a minor league, and all but two would eventually spend some time at that level of play. On average, the 17 participants played approximately 170 regular season games in a North American minor professional hockey league (less than half the average number of NHL games played by the sample). As Participant 09 described, minor professional hockey often represented the first of several phases in one's career:

> I guess there were phases. The first phase was the new lifestyle. I mean, I didn't have a lot of money, but when I did sign, I think that my signing bonus was like $60,000. I thought that I wouldn't have to work another day in my life (laughs), and you buy your first car and you find out that that's not going to work. But the newness of it, the excitement of the travel, and playing in all these different cities, and meeting all these people, that was very interesting. And it was funny because

> I didn't play in my first NHL game until I was (late 20s), and I honestly don't think that I was ready to play in the NHL until that time. I needed a lot of seasoning in the minors.

As the previous commentary insinuates, the transition to playing minor professional hockey, at the outset, was a positive experience, and often associated with an increased level of earnings, a new found sense of independence, and feelings of excitement. Participants 12 and 17, for example, provided similar descriptions in regard to their earliest experiences in minor professional hockey:

> It was awesome. I played Junior in my home town, so I lived at home… All of a sudden, I'm 20 years old, I'm living with a roommate, playing pro hockey in (AHL City). It was a little bit of a rough town, but we knew where to stay away from and where to go. It was probably the best experience of my life, my first year pro, because I'm getting paid to play hockey. I'm like, 'Are you kidding me? This is awesome, getting paid to chase around a puck. I've been paying my whole life to play hockey and all of a sudden someone is giving me skates, sticks, and a salary. 'This is fantastic.' I loved it.
>
> - Participant 12

> I went from making $20 a week to I thought I was the richest guy around. My first contract was $20,000 and $5,000 to sign, playing for the (AHL Team). Just independence, because in junior you're billeting with a family, and now you're out on your own, having to find a place to live. I found an apartment with a group of guys who had nothing to do with the hockey team. They were all friends growing up, now they were out on their own. Someone owned a house and they

> all lived out of there - rented a room. So kind of going from that family atmosphere to living on your own, with money in your pocket. I just felt very independent and enjoyed it.
>
> - Participant 17

Although generally regarded as a positive experience, minor professional hockey was not without its tribulations.

Participant 09, in providing the most vivid descriptions of minor professional hockey, noted some of the challenges that were faced in playing in a subordinate league:

> I always say the minors are like boot camp, where they weed out the weak and they really test you. I mean they don't treat you very good down there. The bus rides, the schedule, the accommodations you stay in, and you're basically just the entertainment value for a lot of these small towns.... In the minors, they kick the shit out of you. I mean, I remember playing in (AHL City), where we would - because they were such an old organization, they would always have games on Saturday night in (AHL City), so that meant you had to go on the road Friday, bus back to (AHL City) on Saturday, and then you'd probably go on the road somewhere else. It was two or three times where we were like in Adirondack, which is five hours away, Friday night, bus back five hours, play there (at home, AHL City) Saturday night, and then bus like 10 hours to Hamilton for an afternoon game on Sunday. I mean, you were just dead. So you became mentally tough in a hurry, and if you didn't, obviously your play was going to suffer.

Adding to the psychological fatigue of playing minor professional hockey, Participant 09 noted, was the threat of demotion to an even lesser league, where the likelihood of

reaching the NHL was more remote. Limited in effect at the outset of one's professional career, the challenges presented by minor professional hockey had more pronounced consequences later in participants' lives.

Beyond amateur and minor professional hockey, the Olympic Games represented the most integral vehicle through which elite professional careers were achieved. In three cases, participation in the Olympic Games was directly correlated with subsequent opportunities in the NHL. As one participant described:

> It was pretty cool, going from not having anybody interested in you in pro hockey, to a very successful Olympics, to having three (NHL) teams want you.

With professional hockey players now being allowed to participate in the Olympic Games, the opportunity for amateurs (which the three participants were during their respective Olympic Games) to vault their stature in such a manner is far less likely. For three of the 17 study participants, however, the Olympic Games played a vital role in the ascension to an elite professional career.[9]

Life as an Elite Professional Hockey Player (NHL / WHA)

Spending the better part of childhood and adolescence involved in hockey, the pinnacle of many a career came in adulthood, playing in the NHL and/or WHA. Participants' status as a member of one of these two leagues afforded them a lifestyle that was both privileged and enjoyable. This lifestyle, and its inherent qualities, was one of the most salient themes to emerge from the interviews (and far more prominent than any discussion relating to individual/team achievements).

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[9] In all, four study participants competed in the Olympic Games.

Of the 17 participants in the study, 13 explicitly described this lifestyle (as an elite professional hockey player) in positive terms. The following quotations illustrate these sentiments:

> It was a fantastic lifestyle, especially to play for the (Original Six NHL Team). And I don't know that you realize it that much at the time, but the impact that it has long after you've finished playing hockey is quite tremendous, being an ex-(Original Six NHL Team). Playing Junior A, you play in front of pretty good crowds, but when you go to (Original Six NHL Arena), at the time, and you play in front of 16,000 people, and on (national television), you're just vaulted up to this position, whether you like it or not, where everybody knows you... So that lifestyle, of everybody knowing who you are, and the adulation, mostly, was enjoyable. I mean everybody wants to be successful. And travelling all around North America, doing something you love, getting paid for, is pretty nice.
>
> - Participant 02

> As a professional player, I look back at basically being spoiled. Little things. Being spoiled in that when we would get on a commercial airliner, in those days, we would always pre-board. We always had our own seats on the airplane and pre-board. Being in traffic - Virtually never in traffic. We would practice at 10:00 in the morning, so there wouldn't be any traffic. The day of the game we'd go to the rink at 6:00. Again, no traffic. And then you'd be in the dressing room, and everybody would leave, and you'd get out, and there'd be no traffic. So, goofy things like no traffic, being spoiled; those are the things that come to mind.
>
> - Participant 04

> It was just a big party. Absolutely. Just a big party.
>
> - Participant 10

> It was fantastic. You're babied out there. They give you an itinerary (chuckles lightly): every day the bus leaves at 9:00, to the airport; the flight leaves at 10:30; you arrive at 12:30; bus picks you up, takes you to the hotel; go to practice; go to the game. Everything is regimented for you. You don't have to do any thinking at all. Just make sure you pack properly, bring your tooth brush with you. So, it's a great life, and of course as you get longer in your career, and get more established, it becomes better.
>
> - Participant 15

Part of the appeal with this lifestyle, as Participant 02 noted, was the ability to earn a living through a much-loved pursuit. Given the significance placed upon this pursuit, it should also not be surprising that there existed an association between participants' quality of life and various sport-specific matters.

For example, described by some participants (n = 5) as the "ups and downs," and by others (two) as the "highs and lows," hockey at times could be a source of great gratification, or terrible unpleasantness. Participant 07 noted this duality in a single response:

> Oh god, it (life as a professional hockey player) was a thrill. It was exhilarating. You live in the moment of the excitement and - But along with all the good things, the highs and lows, there were a lot of tensions, a lot of stresses, to play well, and when you didn't play well you were hard on yourself. Nobody was harder on me than myself.

Sport-specific matters affecting participants' quality of life (as elite professional hockey players) varied, but were most typically associated with performance and dealings with team management.

Team management, in particular, could and did affect players' quality of life through a variety of practices. Included among these practices were: trades, releases, contract negotiations, arbitration hearings, and limiting play. With these practices being common to the sport of hockey, the number of examples illustrating the effect of each was numerous.

Player movement (in the form of trades and releases) was perhaps the most pronounced of these practices, directly affecting 14 of the 17 participants. Of those 14, 10 commented on being traded or released (alternatively termed as waived). In some instances, trades were viewed as having a positive effect on quality of life, increasing opportunities for playing time, personal success/comfort, and/or new and rewarding relationships. Participant 05 was the first to comment on the benefits resulting from a trade:

> I signed a five-year contract with the (NHL Team One), so my thought is, 'Well, I'll be in (NHL City One) for, if not five years, four years, three years, two years, minimum.' And before anything ever happened - You know, I never thought I'd get traded, and 11 months later I got traded to (NHL City Two), in the first year of a five-year contract with (NHL City One). So that stands out. You know, 'Why? Why would you sign a guy to a five-year contract?' I mean, it worked out really well for me, coming to (NHL City Two), where I was born, and (receiving) the recognition that I did.

Participant 17 also provided a positive interpretation of the many trades in his career:

> The way I justified it is I was going to a team or an organization that needed me or wanted me, as opposed to, 'This team hates me and they don't want me any more,' and having a lower self-esteem… All the trades were fine that way, and I always looked at the positive and not the negative of, 'Oh, why did they trade me?' and be bitter. It was, 'Hey, I'm going somewhere new. This will be a great experience.' And people in the hockey world have to make tough decisions with contracts, playing time, trades, and whatever else, but ultimately they're doing what's best for the team, and if a team brings you in, they must think that you can help them. And the majority of hockey people are good, nice people. You go to a new family. Whatever team it was, they were always welcoming. You knew you were going to walk into the locker room and immediately be accepted, and have 20 new friends. There were just so many positive new experiences with each team, organization, and city. And what my wife and I found, bouncing around the country, and from Canada to the States, is that there's no perfect place to live. Every city has so many good things to offer and you just have to focus on that.

Several other participants, however, offered a more ambivalent position regarding such transactions. Four participants, for example, refrained from providing any detailed description of their trades. Participant 14, alternatively, in reflecting upon the many transactions he was a part of over the course of his elite professional career, provided perhaps the best example of this ambivalence:

> I started out in (NHL City One) and I was here for my first six years. Then I was in (NHL City Two) for four years, and then, as you say, in my last (number) years

I played on five teams, and it was difficult because of the fact that my wife and I, (Participant's Wife's Name), had three kids by that time. When we left (NHL City Two), we had three kids - a five-year old, a three-year old, and a baby - and I moved out to (NHL City Three). Then I got traded in March to (NHL City Four), so she gets left at home, packing up the house, and doing all that kind of stuff, while I'm away playing. Then the next year we end up back in (NHL City One) so we move from (NHL City Four) to (NHL City One). Then my last year I go to (NHL City Five)… I sat around for a while, not playing, and ended up getting picked up by (NHL City Six) on waivers. Then my wife and kids moved from (NHL City One) to (NHL City Six), so there was a lot of… (pausing) There were some tough times, family wise, because you've got young kids who, 'Where's daddy? What's going on with dad?' and they kind of get pushed to the side a little bit. And that's not a great thing, being a father and a husband, where you're off trying to work and do the best you can, and sometimes you get a little distracted because you've got other things going on in your life, family things and whatnot... So, there were some times that were tougher because of the fact that you had to balance and juggle so many different things, but I wouldn't trade it for anything because it was still obviously playing in the NHL, and living your dream of being a professional hockey player, and sometimes there's certain sacrifices that happen. You know that in the off-season you're there 24/7 for your family… At the end of the day you sort of look upon those things as not such a hardship when you get the other time to spend with your family.

In other instances, trades were less well received. Participants 13 and 15, for example, recalled the emotions surrounding respective trades in their careers:

> When I left the building - we were at our practice rink - I left that building in tears. It was (nearly a decade) that I spent playing in (NHL City).
>
> - Participant 13

> At the time, I was heart broken because I wanted to play for the (NHL Team). My wife was eight months pregnant and - So it's like this: I've been in (NHL City One) for two and a half years; I have a home there; I was established; we had a good, young team; I like everybody; now we got a new coach and it's not going so good. So, I get told at about noon that I've been traded, and I got to be in (NHL City Two) at practice the next morning at 10:00. That's how it works. You leave your wife behind and you go. You get back to see her again when you come home a couple of weeks later, and get her moved down to (NHL City Two), and off to a new life. That's basically how it works as a professional athlete when you're traded. They don't ask you where you want to go, or if the time is good for you (chuckles lightly).
>
> - Participant 15

As Participant 06 added, being traded typically required participants to go through a period of transition, the result of which may or may not have been favourable:

> And then what happens when you get traded, like you start all over. It's tough. Sometimes it's great because you get a new start, but still, you start from square one, and so you need to rebuild all over again. Like, in (NHL City), I built a good reputation, and you sort of get some seniority. And then quite often when you go

> to a new team it's almost like you start all over again, and you have to rebuild again. So, that part's tough.

In those instances where a player's new environment was not conducive to success, a participant's quality of life could certainly be adversely affected. The potential for player movement to cause an adverse affect in a participant's quality of life was particularly evident with releases. Four of the 17 participants in the study were released at some point in the course of their elite professional careers, and of those four, three described the practice as having a deleterious effect (the fourth participant described being released in neither positive nor negative terms, but merely as being a "part of the game"). The following quotations illustrate this sentiment:

> I also got waived right through the league, which meant no other team would pick me up, so I got sent down to the minors… And we just had a baby, my wife and I. I said, 'Okay, I'll go down. I got no choice.' But then when I was down there, they wanted me to go from (Southern American City), which was (NHL Team One)'s farm team, to (Eastern Canadian City), which was (NHL Team Two)'s farm team. I said, 'Oh, I've been traded?' 'No, we're just loaning you to (Eastern Canadian City).' And I said, 'Oh. Well, I'll let you know…' 'Well, if you don't go, we don't have to pay you.' I said, 'I'm aware of that.' 'Well, you have to go.' I said, 'No, I don't.' That's how it ended. I was upset. I was pretty bitter for a while, at how it all went down. At (20 some) years of age, nobody in the league wanted me. I had proven I could play there; now they wanted me to play in the minors? That was alright when I was learning, going up, but I had had enough.
>
> - Participant 02

> I don't know if there's any worse feeling ever than to actually get put on waivers, and released, because it's almost like this team has said, 'Hey, this guy isn't worth anything. Will somebody please take him off our hands?'
>
> - Participant 06

> I loved (NHL Team One)... And god, I think I was third on the team in scoring. We had the second best power play in the league. We were in first, second place the whole year, and… (pauses) I think I was just having too much fun that year. I mean, there were only like two single guys on the team the whole year so it was just a smorgasbord of women out there. I don't think (Coach), who was a reborn Christian, liked that type of lifestyle, and so I think he was waiting for the time - I got hurt and that was it, they got rid of me to (NHL Team Two). So that was a tough time because I really liked that team.... Then I went to (NHL Team Two), which was a dysfunctional organization. I mean, they didn't really know what they were doing out there… I was lucky to play for some pretty bright guys along the way, and there were a few who I played for who weren't so bright. It was the Peter Principle personified for some of these organizations. I mean, quite frankly, I don't think some of those guys could run a high school team.
>
> - Participant 10

Likely compounding the negative evaluation of being released is the transaction's symbolism as a penultimate point in an NHL career (as each of the four participants had played their final game in the NHL within two seasons of being released).

Participants' quality of life could also be negatively affected through more direct dealings with team management (typically in the form of contract negotiations,

arbitration hearings, and relationships with coaches). Of the 17 participants in the study, six spoke of conflicts with team management (be it upper management or coaching staffs). Participant 07, for example, recalled one such quarrel and how it caused his NHL career to be shortened:

> One instance that probably shortened my NHL career was going to salary arbitration - before it was fashionable to do so. After having a really good year in (NHL City) my contract was up. The GM (General Manager) offered me $10,000 less than what I was making, and I wasn't too happy with that because of my statistics. So, my lawyer and myself, we decided to go to salary arbitration, and instead of a two-way contract, the arbitrator made it a three-way contract; instead of either playing in the NHL or the American League, it was the NHL, American League, or International League, with three different pay scales. It's like I could drop down to the bottom again, if they chose to do so - but my NHL salary went up. But the GM kind of showed me when he played me the next year in Montreal for the home opener and we lost. I got sent down and spent the rest of that contract playing in the minors - except when - (NHL Player) was the other goalie at the time - got hurt. So I came up, played in, I think, three games. They were battling to get into the playoffs. I think I got three out of the four points, or something like that, and then they sent me down. They got in the playoffs, they sent me back down, and I didn't even get to come back up to be the third goalie in the playoffs. So back then the GMs could kind of fuck you if they wanted to, and so I kind of got fucked because I went to salary arbitration. If I look back at a turning point, that probably turned out not to be a good move for my career.

Participants 08 and 10 provided similar stories in describing how they came to play in Europe:

> I was a free agent and (NHL General Manager) (snickers) didn't want to pay - Not that he didn't want to pay, but he wanted to pay less than he would be paying... So (NHL General Manager) was being an arse (said slightly under breath; researcher laughs), and I took him to arbitration… It (the arbitration hearing) was supposed to be July 1, but (NHL General Manager) found an excuse that he couldn't do it, so we said at training camp, just before training camp in (NHL City). So, we got to (NHL City), and he found an excuse, 'Too busy with training camp.' Then, after training camp, he didn't protect me and nobody picked me, so he sent me to the minors - another form of intimidation - They knew my wife was coming with my eight-month old kid because, you know, they were flying her like eight hours to get there, and the day she got there I had to go right away. Then they sent me to (AHL City). Then I was supposed to fly to New York for the arbitration and he made up a story. Then at the end of the season, I was supposed to have arbitration, and he made up a story again.... Then finally I went to Chicago in July. Finally we had the arbitration. Nine hours. He's lying, making up stories. They talk, we talk, and I just want to jump over - I always wondered why a team that wants a player would lie. It doesn't make sense. If I were an arbitrator, I'd say, 'Somebody's bullshitting,' especially - everybody knows (NHL General Manager)… [Ultimately] he bought me out, and I ended up going to (NHL Team Two). I had enough of the whole NHL thing (leaving for Europe the following season).
>
> - Participant 08

Second day of camp, I'm put in the bad group, so I start skipping the morning practices. I was going out to a place called Bobby McGee's until 3:00 in the morning, then I'd come in - hopefully not alone (researcher laughs) - But I'd go to the afternoon practices. I'd go to the scrimmages, but I wouldn't go to the morning ones. So they caught wind of it finally, and I get a call from (Coach), and he said, 'What the fuck do you think you're trying to pull?' I was like, 'Excuse me, who's calling?' He goes, 'Get your fucking ass down here, (Participant's Name).' I said, 'I've got to get some breakfast and do some things, but I'll be there.' I got there and there was just steam coming out of his head. So he basically kicked me out of training camp. Told me to go to (Minor League Affiliate City) and wait. And so I think I said, 'You know what, (Coach), you were a scout two years ago and now you're a GM. You'll be out of hockey long before me I bet.' So then I went down to (Minor League Affiliate City) and they wanted to - I get a call from (Assistant General Manager), the Assistant GM, who I watched stumble around as a (NHL Team One), as a young kid, and he said, 'Hey - ' it's as if he was reading from a script - 'The (NHL Team Two) are not in the policy of paying major league money to minor league players.' I said, 'Tough shit, shouldn't have signed my deal' (researcher chuckles). And he said, 'Well, we want to keep you in the game. We're prepared to offer you a three-year deal.' I go, 'Really?!' I'm down in (Minor League Affiliate), you know, and I'm like, 'What's that?' He goes, 'Well, we're prepared to offer you 175,000, 185,000, and 195,000.' I go, 'That sounds great, but what if you guys don't like me?' (in a muffled voice) 'Then you make 25,000, 30,000, and 35,000.' I go, 'So, I'd make less in three

> years than I can make in one year. Let me think that over, (Assistant General Manager)' (researcher chuckles). So I called back, 'I think I'll just stay on this deal.' So then they said, 'Well, don't pack a lot of shit because we're going to send you to a lot of places.' I said, 'Hey, I've got no kids and I'm not married. I love travelling. Just make sure my tickets are paid for and my per diem's there and I'm ready to go.' So they wanted me to go to Fredericton one day and I said, 'Where's my ticket?' They go, 'Just charge it.' 'Fuck you! I'm not charging you a ticket. You get me a ticket; I'll go to Fredericton. Otherwise, fuck you.' So they finally bought me out. And I had a deal to go to Europe, so I went to Europe.
>
> - Participant 10

As the three examples highlight, conflicts with team management rarely ended in the participant's favour.

Another method by which teams expressed authority over its players was through benching. Experienced by four of the 17 participants, benching, or being a "healthy scratch," was commonly described as being a demoralizing practice. Emblematic of such feelings were comments made by Participants 06 and 09:

> Life as a professional hockey player, it's 98% good. There's about 2% that isn't and that 2% is when you get really badly injured, and when they bench you and you're not getting a chance to play.... that was really tough because I ended up getting sat on the bench in (NHL City One) for about four months, and I ended up finally begging to get out of there. I'd say it just about ruined me at that time because I had gone from being a really great goal scorer in (NHL City Two) to -

> for whatever reason, they decided that I wasn't good enough to play, or that my commitment wasn't there.
>
> - Participant 06

> I was in a bit of a depression during that time.... I mean, I sat out more games than I probably played, as a healthy scratch or being hurt. There, in (NHL City), what was so difficult was I was making $2,000,000 that year, and I only played in (number; less than half the season) games… But it was difficult because I was making the money that I was making, I was getting barbequed in the media because of how much I was making, and I had a clause in my contract that if I played - I think I had to play 63 games that year to get a guaranteed fourth year, and - alright, so they're screwing me. So once I couldn't make the 63-game mark, I still wasn't playing, and it was just - I worked hard in practice - and I never moped around the guys - I worked my ass off - but at home is where I kind of just fell apart. That was the most difficult part of it because you were willing - I mean, I even said, 'Send me to the minors. Trade me. Do something. I just want to play.' And they just wouldn't. I mean, I sat out for almost three months… You know, when it's all over, you look at it and say, 'Hey, they didn't want to play me, fine. I made some good money.' But during that time, you want to play. I mean, that's what we do. You know, you practice, and you want to play.
>
> - Participant 09

Being benched, similar to being released, often occurred toward the end of one's NHL career, and represented perhaps the most dramatic example of how team management could negatively affect a participant's quality of life.

Unrelated to the practices of a team, and as Participants 06 and 09 noted, injuries too presented a source of frustration for elite professional hockey players. Commonplace to the sport, injuries could often keep players from, as Participant 09 so aptly described, 'doing what they do.' Eleven of the 17 participants spoke of the injuries they incurred over the course of their careers, with Participant 15 providing the most extensive list:

> For anybody to make it to the big leagues you had to be competitive, and you had to be right on the edge. It's such a competitive and tough sport to play. Ten teeth knocked out, broken nose, broken cheek, concussions, broken jaw. You want me to start there and keep going? Shoulder, wrists, hands, knuckles, and both thumbs.

The types of injuries sustained by participants ranged considerably, but may be considered to be: negligible, allowing for few or no games to be missed; significant, requiring many games to be missed and/or a change in style of play; or career-ending. Participant 16, for example, described the rather routine nature of minor injuries:

> You get injured all the time. I mean, you're always playing injured in the NHL. There's always something. That's just a fact of life. I'm sore now when I get off the ice after three or four hours just because it's the nature of the beast.

Participant 13, alternatively, described the consequences resulting from his most significant injury:

> Well, my situation was probably different than a lot of others because I was forced to change my game part way through my career, basically because of an injury.... I was on my way to a 40 or 50-goal season, and the most I ever scored after that was (number; less than 20) and it progressively, as the (ability)

> degenerated, got worse and worse… So, I had to transition my game into becoming known as a defensive player more so than a scoring player.

Several participants also suffered career-ending injuries, requiring them to prematurely leave the sport. With a significant emphasis in sport placed on physical ability, the effect of any injury could be considerable.

As Participant 13 described, his injury required him to alter his style of play, and embrace a new role within his team. Although a role may be adopted as a result of an injury, they may also be promoted, reinforced, or altered by teams. In total, seven participants spoke of adopting (or not adopting) a particular role, including the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance. Participant 15, for example, described his role as a "sluggo" (a fighter):

> I was a sluggo. I had to make sure that those guys (describing his teammates, the "bread and butter players") had room out there. If guys were taking their liberties on them then that's when my job came into play. I had about 100 NHL fights... Won a few, lost a few…. (describing his life as fighter further) Night before a game, I'd go out all by myself and think about who would be on the other team's line-up that I was going to be scrapping with. And I'd know - we'd know before warm-up who would be going. You know, I enjoyed fighting. I liked it. I got pretty good at it, and practiced it. Even at home, I shadowboxed in the mirror. Fought with guys like (NHL Player) after every practice, when we were with the (NHL Team) together. Boxed, gloves on, down on the mats. I worked hard on my fighting because I didn't like getting hit and beat up, so I worked hard on being able to protect myself. Keeping my chin back and still having a good long straight

> jab (mimics the fighting stance he once would have taken), and followed by my right… Sometimes it was very nerve-wracking, knowing that you had to take on a younger guy who was bigger than you, but suck it up. It's not a game for the meek and mild, the fighting game…You may be coming out, you may be getting a black eye, you may be getting a broken nose, or you may be getting really hurt, but that's why you're there, that's the path you took.

In adopting this role, Participant 15 was also able to assemble a rather lengthy elite professional hockey career (spanning more than a decade). Participant 14, conversely, suggested his role as a fighter limited his ability to continue playing in the NHL:

> Sometimes you get pigeonholed as a player. Like, 'You're a tough guy and it doesn't matter if you can play, but if you're not going to be a tough guy any more then you can't play,' and it's kind of… (pausing) whatever. It's one of those things I don't agree with… At the end of my career, I could look after myself, and if I had to fight for a teammate I could do that, but I couldn't be the designated tough guy because I was too small. Like the friggin young guys coming in were 6'4", 6'5", 220, 230, 240 (pounds), and I'm 190 pounds. I'll fight the guy if they come and try and take a run at me - or if they take a run at one of my teammates, I'll go in and defend my teammate - but I can't be the guy who's going to go out every night and fight the tough guy on the other team, because I'm not capable of doing that. I can play the game, but some people get the vision of 'This is the way this guy is supposed to be, and if he can't do that then he can't play,' and that's where you get pissed at the game because you know you can play, and you can contribute, but people don't allow you to do that.

Participants 03 and 06 shared similar stories:

> Like when I look back on it, one of the things that stood out is I wish I would have had more confidence when I was in the NHL. I probably should have fought more, believe it or not, and I'm not a fighter. I mean, that wasn't my role, but just do something more to prove that I'll do anything to stay in the NHL.... When I played in the minors I was a top centre man... and when I was with (NHL Team One), they had me on the fourth line with two fighters and I'd play like five minutes a night, and a healthy scratch every second game. Then I went to the (NHL Team Two) organization thinking, 'I'll get a chance. They need offence, and I was lighting it up in the minors, where I was the go-to-guy.' Then I go to (NHL Team Two) and play like six minutes on the fourth line again. And then the one time when I got to play in a second line role, with the (NHL Team One) - (Coach) was the associate coach. (Coach/GM) was the coach and GM. So he had to go to GM's meetings, and (Coach) would be the head coach. And (Coach) likes my hard work, and all that stuff, so he put me with (NHL Player One) and (NHL Player Two) and I had a goal and an assist that game. And then (Coach/GM) comes back and I'm back to the fourth line again. So I thought that if I was given the opportunity to play with (the right) players, and given the opportunity to be more offensive, then I could do that. I just don't think that I got the right chance.
>
> - Participant 03

> ... My play deteriorated to the point that there was no reason for the (NHL Team) to want to keep me. And the thing is I never got to switch roles. I was a goal

> scorer, but I never got a chance to transition into a lesser role, say as a checker, or a penalty killer, which I could have easily done, and extended my career.
>
> - Participant 06

As Participant 06 suggested, those able to switch roles were more likely to prolong their career. As Participant 13 had, Participant 11, a goaltender, too switched roles in the midst of his career, playing both as a backup (second string) and a starter (first string) in the NHL. When asked to describe the differences between the two goaltending positions, Participant 11 responded:

> You're always all for the team, but as a backup, you almost have to find ways to feel important, or to feel a part of the team, and that's tough when you're going on one start every three weeks. And nobody wants to hear about it, that it's tough, because you just have to get the job done. It's definitely mentality changing. When I got to be a starter there for about three months, it was (snapping fingers) just boom, going back in the game. It's easier to play as a starter, for sure, because you're right back in; you don't have to wait three weeks and then - Can you imagine having a tough night, waiting three weeks, and having a tough night again? (both the participant and the researcher chuckle) All of a sudden, everything changes. So when I transitioned out of the NHL and went to Europe, in a way, it was a positive part of my career because I got to play every game. You know, it goes back to playing at the highest level, and getting to play. That's the bottom line, in a sense.

Although not embedded in elite professional hockey in the same manner as other practices (e.g., trades, releases, contracts; all elements of leagues' collective bargaining

agreements), roles (when imposed, adopted, or rejected) were found to affect participants' careers and lifestyles.

Beyond matters pertaining directly to on-ice performance, the careers and lives of professional hockey players featured several notable facets. Salient themes in this regard accounted for: work-family conflicts, the public nature of the profession, and the camaraderie amongst coworkers (i.e., teammates). In each instance, no fewer than six participants (a third of the sample) spoke on these subjects.

In a profession requiring considerable focus, commitment, and dedication (a theme unto itself, discussed by 10 of the participants), there exists an increased likelihood of experiencing some form of work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). As Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) explained,

> work-family conflict exists when: (a) time devoted to the requirements of one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another; (b) strain from participation in one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another; and (c) specific behaviors required by one role make it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another. (p. 76)

Of the 17 participants in this study, 11 described experiences that may be characterized as causing a work-family conflict. Participant 01 provided the first and most detailed example of such:

> From the standpoint of my family, it was tough because my wife and I hadn't made plans to be a professional athlete's family. You know, we were going to teach. We had a house, we had our first child, and it was going to be 'live in this house for the rest of our lives' kind of a thing. And I mean a hockey player's life

> isn't like that at all.... Especially when you've got children and you're in that position where the day of a game: I get up late in the morning because I want to sleep in; I don't see the kids in the morning or the afternoon; by 4:00 in the afternoon the kids come home, they know not to talk to dad sort of a thing; then it's that quiet drive to the rink with my wife; and it's me getting home at 11:00 absolutely wired. It gets you totally out of sync with the expected life of children and wife. And then it's going away: it's the road trips, it's training camp, it's playoff time where they try to separate - in those days - I don't even know what they do now, but in those days, once you got into the playoffs it was home or away. You were going to be staying in a hotel and separated from your family. So it does screw that aspect up, that you're just out of sync with everything. I always justified it on the basis that, 'Yeah, but as soon as the season's over, the first of June, then I can devote my time to the family.' And we headed up north to (Town) and we would have great summers. But it didn't help, really, with regard to the family life. I mean, we enjoyed the summers, but the winters were always bad that way.

Participant 14, alternatively, described such conflict in relation to being traded:

> Like when I got traded to (NHL City One) from (NHL City Two), I've got a daughter who's a year and a half old, and my wife's pregnant, and she's leaving (NHL City Two), which is her home, and you move to (NHL City One). Well, I have 22, 23, 24 instant friends, because you go to the locker room every day and you've got your teammates and whatever. Your wife goes into a place where she's got to find a doctor for the kids, find a dentist for the kids, find her way

> around, get to the know the wives, and different things like that, and sometimes it's difficult for them… Once it happens a couple of times they get used to doing it a little more, but at the beginning it's difficult and it's tough on them. And it's just that much easier for the player because you have your family away from your family with your teammates. So, it's pretty easy for the hockey player because you jump right in, you go to the rink every day, you practice, and when you go on the road you got a roommate you hang out with and go for dinner and whatever, where the wives end up being stuck at home with young kids and having to fend for themselves a little bit.

Although participants seldom spoke directly of such conflict, several examples were apparent (e.g., in describing one's lifestyle).

The negative effects potentially resulting from work-family conflict could, however, be mitigated. Participants 12 and 17, for example, praised their respective spouses for assuming a greater familial role (alleviating the familial responsibilities of the participants):

> My wife is awesome. She got it real quick. I mean, there have been horror stories that you would hear. Some people would say - all of a sudden a wife becomes pregnant, and she's at home with a brand new baby, and the father has to take off and go on a two-week road trip out to LA and stuff, and the wife is by herself… Some of the women can't handle that and they need to have support. My wife was fantastic… Everyone has their own way of doing it and her way was to take care of the kids, and that's what she likes to do, and I've got no qualms with that. She

loved being with the kids 24-7, whether I was there or not. We never had an issue with any of that. She was probably the best mom I could ever have for my kids.

- Participant 12

I was so lucky - I still am lucky to have a wife like (Participant's Wife's Name) because she was unbelievable. It was about me, my career, and she was perfectly fine and helped me as much as possible with that. She managed the house, and kept everything organized and on track, and so home life was great... Like when I was traded, it was no problem; she could handle all the movers and all the things that have to be done when you get traded like that. From (NHL City One) to (NHL City Two), I found out at noon, or 2:00 in the afternoon, and by 5:00 I was on my way to the airport and I was gone, and she was there with an eight-month old and having to organize the movers and stuff to pack everything and get us out of there, to (NHL City Two). Then we had to find a place to live in (NHL City Two) - And even when you find a place, you've got to get the cable hooked up, and the water, and all those other things. I mean she handled whatever it was perfectly. I can't say enough about her and her helping me with my career, or allowing me to just play hockey. And I didn't have to worry about anything. She wasn't jealous, asking, 'Where are you going? What are you doing? You're out again tonight,' blah blah blah. You know, going on the road, she wasn't calling me every friggin twenty minutes, 'Where are you? Who are you with? Are you fucking around on me?' She was never like that, and it made it so much easier to enjoy life coming home. You know, when I was home, I wasn't thinking, 'Oh, I wish I was on the road.' When I was on the road, I wasn't bothered; I was able to

> just play. And I know, because I've had roommates and teammates, it wasn't the same for them; their friggin wives would be bitching about every single thing. I didn't have that, and I'm fortunate because I know guys who did and I didn't like what I saw there. And I think it took away from some guys' ability to focus and play, because they were getting so much grief away from the rink.
>
> - Participant 17

In other instances, the negative effects of work-family conflict were lessened through careful planning, or by avoiding marriage altogether (allowing one to focus solely on their career).

Work-family conflict was not, however, entirely indicative of participants' relationships; rather, spouses and families often represented primary sources of support. Participant 13 perhaps best described the value of such support, noting:

> My first wife, who I was married to when I went to (NHL City) - which I really credit to me staying in (NHL City), because I've seen what happens when the guys hit the nightlife and the bars; it ends a lot of guys' careers early, or it takes them a lot longer to make it to the NHL. Having a wife to go home to every night, and not heading to the bar, or going that route, I really think it gave me some solid footing for a skinny 19-year old kid to walk into the NHL and not see the American League. I never played a game in the American Hockey League until my last year pro...

As participants also explained, this support would be integral in their transitions to a post-playing life.

Another common topic of discussion for participants (n = 10) was the public nature of their profession. Having received both praise and scorn from fans and media alike, the celebrity status of participants presented a duality similar to the "ups and downs" aforementioned. Participant 16, in describing the enjoyment he receives as a result of his celebrity, noted the existence of this duality:

> I still get people writing me - Here I am, 20 years removed from the NHL, and people are still writing me for my autograph. I'm like, 'C'mon, does this ever stop?' No, it's great. I'm not saying I hope it does, because it's kind of cool.... It's great, but it's a curse too. So from that standpoint, pro hockey, and being a professional, you're in the limelight, and it's how you handle it. I enjoy it. I've parlayed it into, basically, a career.

Several other participants expressed similar appreciation for their respective celebrity, adding, as Participant 16 had, that this status provided them with opportunities that may not have otherwise been made available.

The responses of fans and media alike could, however, influence participants' confidence and level of play. Participant 04, for example, recalled how it felt to be booed by fans:

> Oh that has a big effect on you, when you're booed in your own building. When you're booed in another building it means you're a great player, but when you're booed in your own building, - and great players have also been booed in their own building - it's very difficult, especially when you know that your wife is in the stands - and you could have your parents there, you could have a brother, a sister -

> Being booed in your own building is not nice. And lots of players have been booed. It's very difficult.

Participant 09 similarly described how being "barbequed" by the media made his time as a "healthy scratch" more difficult. Equally apprehensive of receiving an unjust amount of praise, participants developed methods by which to cope with the public and media:

> One of the things that (NHL Player One) always told me was, 'Don't read the newspapers. The people who write the articles know jack about what you're doing. You know if you blew a goal, or if you didn't blow one, so why are you even bothering with what anybody else's opinion is?' I used to laugh at that and then I realized, 'Well, you know, it's pretty good advice.' You know, 'don't judge yourself by what you read about yourself the morning after in the newspaper, judge yourself by the game that you played.' So, I did find myself always avoiding - I didn't seek out opportunities to see what others thought of my performance. All I was worried about was how my teammates felt about how I performed.... I think your confidence - You make choices about the public and I can understand why guys make the choice which is, 'I'm just going to hide. I don't want to have anything to do with them' - because they can pump you up higher than you maybe should be, or they can knock you down lower than maybe you should be.... There was a guy, Tim Gallwey, who wrote a book called Inner Tennis, and it was talking about getting your mind out of your performance and letting your mind automatically do things. The more you thought, the worse you were. I totally believed that and would do things - like before going to bed at night, I had my affirmations that I'd listen to on a tape, and all of that. And all of

> those things are basically confidence builders, reinforcing the positives in one's life, because there were a lot of negative influences that were there.
>
> - Participant 01

> I was told by (Coach) not to listen to radio, not to read the newspapers, and his philosophy was, 'If it's good, it's not going to help you, and if it's bad, it might bother you.' Consequently, I wouldn't listen, I wouldn't read.
>
> - Participant 04

> If things were going well, you didn't want to read about how good you were doing because it would over-inflate your ego, and if things were going poorly, you didn't need to read about how bad you were, so you tried to keep more of a neutral kind of even keel... Kind of the worst thing for Montreal and Toronto, being hockey hotbeds with the media, is that when everything is going great, it sucks for the reporters. They like it when Toronto's 4-11 (i.e., 4 wins - 11 losses) to start. If they were winning, and everything was smooth, and everyone loved each other, what the hell would they write about? It drives them nuts. It's almost like - When things are going really good for a hockey team, or any sport team, you just know that the media are there looking for some piece of dirt to write about because they got to sell papers. That's why I never tried to listen too much to [the media]. You know when you're playing well, you know how the team's doing, you don't really need to read about how good you are or how bad you are.
>
> - Participant 17

Participants, having been elevated in stature, suggested that celebrity provided for both distractions during one's career and opportunities following retirement.

Another of the study's most salient themes pertained to participants' regard for camaraderie. Of the 17 participants in the study, six spoke of the relationships they established as a result of their professional hockey careers. Participants 02 and 12 most aptly described the value of this camaraderie:

> Fans look at your hockey career as the hockey stats and what you did, but if you ask the hockey players, it's being with the guys, and playing the game that you love, and the memories you build up… But it's always, to me, the people who make things enjoyable. And the people in hockey whom I played with - I loved playing for the (NHL Team One) and (NHL Team Two) (goes on to list several former teammates)… And I go golfing with the alumni now, every other week we'll have a game, and I just love it. I love being out there with the guys.
>
> - Participant 02

> That was the thing I missed most too, was the camaraderie. Every morning you wake up, you go to the rink, you grab a coffee along the way to the rink, you get in, you get into the change room, you get into your underwear for hockey, and you sit around and BS with the guys for about an hour before you go on the ice. Then you go on the ice and you're playing a kids' game; you're hanging out playing hockey. Yeah, it's at the highest level, and it's a job, and it's serious, but the bottom line, when everyone says it's a job, it is a job, but it's fun…. I loved it, and hanging out with the guys was the biggest thing.
>
> - Participant 12

As the two participants indicated, camaraderie amongst teammates often represented the defining quality of an elite professional hockey career.

The comments of Participant 12 also reflected the general views of the sample, as a majority of participants reverted to utilizing such qualities (e.g., camaraderie, lifestyle, and the beloved nature of the sport) in coming to a positive assessment of their respective careers (and consequently, deflecting the distress caused by other influences). Perhaps the best representation of these assessments was provided by Participant 05, who described his career as such:

> A privilege. To me it was a privilege to have had the opportunity to spend, really, (more than a decade) in the National Hockey League as a player. It was a life long dream. The word that I use is privilege. And when you think about the National Hockey League, the history - You know, the Montreal Canadiens just celebrated their 100th anniversary this year, and there's something like 6,000 players who ever played a game in the National Hockey League, and to be one of those who - some guys played one game, and some guys, up to Gordie Howe, played 2,000 or so games - to be one of those 6,000 players, a privilege. I never take it for granted, and when people ask, 'What was it like to be an NHL player?,' it was a privilege. It actually was a privilege. I never took it for granted. Always worked hard, was very dedicated, very disciplined in my work habits, my off-ice living. It was just a privilege to be an NHL player.

Given such positive assessments, it should not be surprising that participants expressed some sense of difficulty, or disappointment, in having to leave elite professional hockey.

Leaving Elite Professional Hockey (NHL)

For six of the 17 participants in the study, the NHL represented the final destination in one's professional hockey career.[10] Leaving professional hockey, on average, at the age of 34, these six participants provided a variety of reasons for retirement. Included among these reasons were (the number of participants, of these six (n = 6), who provided said reason is in parentheses): injury, physical fatigue, and/or deterioration of ability (n = 2); loss of motivation and/or enjoyment (n = 2); difficulties with athletic lifestyle/work-family conflict (n = 2); deselection/lack of continued opportunities (n = 2); difficulties with a sport bureaucracy (i.e., coaches, team, athletic system) (n = 1); and pursuit of new opportunities (n = 1).

Of these six participants, three provided multiple reasons for their respective retirements. Participant 01, for example, provided this explanation for his retirement from the NHL:

> Well, it was really two things. It was not playing to the standard that I wanted to be at. I mean, the reality was if I had been having a terrific year, my last year of pro hockey, I probably would have tried to milk it for another year or something like that, but I honestly, at that point, wasn't enjoying the life. I found it terribly boring… You worried about your rest, about your food… And I found myself sitting around a lot during the day of a game totally bored and thinking, 'I'm not enjoying this.' That's when I really thought, 'Well, I will get into the coaching end of it,' and so I started, during the times I wasn't playing, or the afternoon of a game, or whatever, I'd be reading over coaching manuals, and I attended Level 5

[10] The WHA merged with the NHL prior to the retirement of any participant.

> (coaching courses), all sorts of things like that. But, I found the hockey life terribly boring. And then again, I was 38 years old. (NHL Player One), (NHL Player Two), these young guys who were joining the team, they were 18 years old. I wasn't with my age group any more. They were great kids, but it wasn't the kind of thing that you chummed around with (NHL Player) or anybody like that. I mean, my kids were closer in age - yeah, they were - my son, by that time, was 15 and (NHL Player) was 18. Just all of those things sort of added together in just saying, 'No. Now is the time.'

Participants 15 and 17 similarly provided multiple reasons for their own retirements.

The other three participants in the sub-sample were able to specify a particular cause of retirement. Participant 04, for example, pointed to a conflict with a coach as being the reason for his retirement:

> The circumstances were very simple for me, the coach didn't like me… (pauses) and that happens… We had a coach here in (NHL City) for whom I played for three years, and we never saw eye to eye. He was the boss. Because I was 34 - at that time, that was getting up there pretty good in age, 34, but looking at today, I should have still been able to play the game. Under a different coach, different circumstances, I could have still played. But this guy was the boss, and the boss always wins…. I could have gone and played in the minors. I didn't want to. I played (several) years in the NHL, and the NHL is so... so much nicer the way you're treated in the NHL versus the minors. So to go from the minors to the NHL is great, but to go backwards is not good, and I just didn't want to go, so the

> General Manager at that time said, '(Participant's Name), we'll pay you the rest of the year and you don't have to do a thing.' So, I retired, prematurely.

Participants 05 and 09, alternatively, shared a single reason for their retirement, that being an injury.

As Participant 04 insinuated, in some instances, a career in hockey could be extended by playing in some minor professional league. Of the 17 participants in the study, five extended their careers in such a manner. For three of these five participants, the decision to play minor professional hockey was associated with a desire to regain a position in the NHL. For the other two participants, minor professional hockey was but a short foray that followed an otherwise lengthy career. With one exception, the participants spent no more than one season in a North American minor professional hockey league (following their time in the NHL).[11] Participant 07, in describing his retirement, provided insight as to why these ventures may have been brief:

> I played 10 or 11 years and near the end I knew I wasn't going to get another shot in the NHL. I was in (NHL City), I played on the farm team, and I was basically the third goalie. If someone got hurt, or whatever, they would call me up. The money wasn't great in the minors.... The equipment still wasn't as good as it is today. It was getting better, but I was starting to get sore more, and then sore and stiff in the morning. Just a combination of things that ultimately - I wasn't invincible any more, and the money to play in the minors wasn't really worth it.

Those participants who played their final professional hockey game in a North American minor league provided the following reasons for retirement (the number of participants,

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[11] The one exception was Participant 16, whose career in the NHL was followed by multiple seasons of minor professional hockey.

of these five (n = 5), who provided said reason is in parentheses): injury, physical fatigue, and/or deterioration of ability (n = 4); loss of motivation and/or enjoyment (n = 3); difficulties with athletic lifestyle/work-family conflict (n = 3); deselection/lack of continued opportunities (n = 2); pursuit of new opportunities (n = 1); and psychological fatigue (n = 1). Three participants, again, provided multiple reasons for retirement.

As an alternative to North American minor leagues, European professional hockey represented a viable avenue by which one could extend his career. The decision of participants to play professionally overseas was often related to one or more factors, including: poor player-management relations (i.e., player-management conflict), a lack of playing opportunities in elite professional hockey, and the limited earning potential associated with a career in North American minor professional hockey. In coming to this decision, participants also acknowledged the possibility that the potential for a continued career in the NHL (playing or otherwise) would no longer exist. Participants 03 and 16 both acknowledged this potential in coming to contrary decisions (with the former choosing to play in Europe, and the latter remaining in North America):

> It was my fifth year in pro hockey and I had had about (number) or so games under my belt. The team I was playing for was the (NHL Team)'s farm club in (AHL City). I had been the leading scorer two years in a row, so I was going to agree to a minor league contract that would: keep me in North America, in a city that I liked; have me make some good money; and provide some security. But the coach wasn't willing to give me the money or the years that I wanted. And, you know, if you make a mark in the minors then teams from Europe will find you. So a team from Europe was interested and their contract offer was better. So I said to

> the coach, 'Listen, I've got a better contract offer. What am I going to do?' And he's like, 'I can't match it.' So I decided to go take that offer to go to Europe, and thinking more, again, about the security of the tax-free money, the shorter season. After I agreed to go to Europe I realized that once I go, I'm off the hockey map, and I'd never be back. I had to be okay with it; had no other choice.
>
> - Participant 03

> So at the end of the year I said, '(NHL General Manager), would you mind if I go off and take a look and see if there's any other teams I can get a contract from, and if I don't, would you consider signing me to be your Player-Assistant Coach in (AHL City) with (AHL Head Coach)?' He said, 'We'd do that in a heartbeat.' I said, 'Great.' So I went out and fielded some offers, but no one was willing to sign me right there. They wanted me to come to camp, and I'm saying, 'Well, I can go to Europe and play.' My wife was, 'Yeah, let's go to Europe! Go to Europe. Let's go to Europe. Let's go play.' And I said, 'Well hon, if I go over there - ' At that time, you came back and you got lost. Unless you carved out a life over there, coming back into the professional hockey ranks (in North America) at that time didn't happen; just didn't happen, whether it be in coaching or whatever.... It was very seldom that a guy went over there and was able to come back and forge out a career.... that was my perception, and that was where I derived my decision from (to stay in North America).
>
> - Participant 16

Participant 16, however, was the only individual to make such a decision, as seven others chose instead to play overseas.

For six of these seven participants, a career in Europe proved to be highly enjoyable. Participants 03, 08, and 12 for example, contrasted their respective experiences in Europe and the NHL, seemingly favouring the former:

> (Playing in Europe) was cool. I guess the best way to describe it was you're a big fish in a small pond. You know, you went over there - each team had a certain number of imports - so you came over as a star before you played your first game. And then, if you played well your first bunch of games, you were that star. You know, you'd played a ton, and you'd be out there for all the important parts of the game. I mean, specifically hockey wise, that's what I liked to do; I liked to have my finger prints all over the game. That for me was what being a hockey player was about; not being a healthy scratch, and sitting in the crowd and eating popcorn in a suit, and then the team loses and you come downstairs, and you're disconnected from that. And it was another experience - And, again, for me, it was more monetary. I knew I'd make more money playing in Europe than I did in the minors, and because I didn't feel that comfortable in the NHL, and I didn't think that a team would give me the proper chance to feel comfortable, I kind of went with the more solid option, which was go to Europe.
>
> - Participant 03

> Well, the NHL was… (pauses) more travelling… (pauses) very intense. It was tough to make a team and it was even tougher staying. Get up in the morning, go to practice, pre-game skate, a lot of video, and every game was hard fought. So, you know, you're with big stars and it's almost like you're getting a status, a bit, of doing something that all the young kids wanted to do. And in Europe, it was a

little different. I had two kids, little kids, and you played all afternoon games, and you got to travel here and there. I was one of the two imports, and I was playing a ton. I was doing well, and I liked the lifestyle, and it was different. My best memories are in Europe, although the NHL was special. Maybe I never had the career I wanted in the NHL, like playing many years, but in Europe I had a good time. It was great for my family as well.

- Participant 08

It (time abroad) was probably, next to the Olympics, and obviously my first game in the NHL, the highlight of my career... You know, you're not playing hockey every day, so you have a chance to go see things that you would never see… I was able to travel and see all of Europe… It was a fabulous experience. Any friends who came over didn't know what to expect, because they would come to the (NHL Arena One) or (NHL Arena Two) and watch me play there, and they'd have their ideas of how hockey should be, and all of a sudden, they come over to Europe and it's a soccer type attitude where people are singing, dancing, drinking, and it's a party the whole game. They don't care who's winning, they don't care who's losing, it's just a big party. To play under that type of atmosphere is a lot of fun, and that's one of the reasons why I enjoyed it so much.... the NHL was very business-like. You're under a microscope. Because I was a third or fourth line player in the NHL, I had to watch myself every single time I was - I couldn't make one mistake. If I made one mistake, I'd find myself down in the minors. You were scrutinized wherever you went… Over in Europe, it's more of a laid back atmosphere. Soccer, cricket, handball, those are seen as the bigger sports.

> Where hockey is the number one item on a sport page in a newspaper, in Europe, it's on page five, or six, or seven. So, it's not as big a spotlight, which was kind of nice. In terms of the competition, the intensity, when you're on the ice, it's exactly the same as it was in the NHL. And you didn't have to worry about making as many mistakes over there as you did here. You couldn't be traded out of (the country). You weren't going to be cut. You weren't going to be sent down to the minors. You were on a team. You signed a contract; you're on that team the whole year. There weren't as many things to worry about from that side of things.
>
> - Participant 12

The only individual failing to express similar satisfaction was Participant 02, who held an overwhelming desire to remain in the NHL:

> I went over to Europe for two weeks. I had an agent who said, 'There's an opportunity over in Europe to play hockey.' I wasn't interested. To myself, I'm saying, 'I'm either playing in the NHL or I'm not playing.' So I told him, 'No, I'm not interested in going to Europe.' 'Well, they'd really like to have you come,' he said. So, it was about two months after I had retired, or maybe six weeks, and finally I said, 'Alright, I'll give it a go.' They were going to pay for this and that, and give me x amount of dollars for a try out, and I said, 'Okay, I'll go.' I was there for two weeks, and I skated for a week, and then I played a couple of games, and it didn't work out. They were fine. They said, 'Well, maybe it's not what you want.' I stayed for a few more days and then I came back home, and that was it for pro hockey.

European professional hockey was, however, more commonly viewed as an excellent prelude to retirement.

The reasons for retirement provided by this sub-sample included (the number of participants (of the six who ended their career in Europe; n = 6) who provided said reason is in parentheses): injury, physical fatigue, and/or deterioration of ability (n = 4); difficulties with a sport bureaucracy (i.e., coaches, team, athletic system) (n = 2); loss of motivation and/or enjoyment (n = 1); difficulties with athletic lifestyle/work-family conflict (n = 1); deselection/lack of continued opportunities (n = 1); and pursuit of new opportunities (n = 1).[12] Of the six participants who ended their careers in Europe, four provided multiple reasons. Two participants shared a single cause for retirement, that being, again, an injury.

The 11 participants whose careers ended in a league other than the NHL left elite professional hockey, on average, at the age of 28, approximately six years before their counterparts. The non-elite professional hockey careers that followed the elite equivalent had an average length of five years, and increased the average age of retirement for these 11 individuals to 33. The average age of retirement (from all of professional hockey) for the entire sample (N = 17) was 33. The participants' (N = 17) reasons for retirement from professional hockey (regardless of league) are summated in Table 3, and share similarities with those provided by other professional athlete populations (cf. Drawer & Fuller, 2002; Fortunato & Marchant, 1999; McKenna & Thomas, 2007).

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[12] The reasons for retirement provided by one participant were not included in these statistics/this list because he followed his career in Europe with a stint in a North American minor professional hockey league. The reasons for this participant's retirement were, however, included with those who played their final professional game in a North American minor league.

Life after Professional Hockey

In retiring from professional hockey, the 17 participants would come to experience a period of significant transition. As a part of this transition, participants may have been subject to a change in lifestyle, identity, relationships, and/or well-being. Given the potential and far-reaching effects of such change, it should not be surprising that amongst participants there existed a considerable range in perception regarding quality of transition. Ten of the 17 study participants, for example, characterized their respective transitions in relatively positive terms (e.g., and in short, "smooth," "pretty good," "better than average," and "relatively easy"). Four other participants, however, provided a dualistic characterization (e.g., and again, in short, "up and down," "successful" but "difficult"), while one shared an overwhelmingly negative account (describing his transition as being "really, really tough," "real hell," and "the years the locusts have eaten"). The remaining two participants, one of whom retired from professional hockey some 20 years ago, acknowledged that their respective transitions were not yet complete. An examination of these transitions revealed that three participants (02, 06, and 10) experienced particularly challenging events or times in the years following athletic retirement. Consistent with existent research (e.g., Cecic Erpic et al., 2004; Chambers, 2002; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001), and as the participants explained, causes for discrepancies in these experiences could be found when examining the effects of various transition-related factors and resources.

Factors Affecting Transition

The factors affecting quality of transition generally pertained to: the organization of a post-playing life (i.e., continuity between pre- and post-retirement environments), athletic identity, occupational adjustment, and physical/psychological maintenance (categories loosely derived from the works of Cecic Erpic et al. (2004) and Stephan and Bilard (2003)). The extent to which participants successfully managed these elements of the transition spoke, to some degree, to the quality of the process. The changes experienced by participants in relation to these elements, and the responses (successful or otherwise) thereto, are subsequently delineated.

At the outset of the transition process, participants were typically forced to respond to some change in lifestyle. Of the 17 participants in the study, 11 provided a direct example of such change. Included among these examples were changes to: family dynamics, social relationships, financial security, routine, and goal formation.

Of these examples, the one most commonly cited by participants pertained to family dynamics. For seven of the 11 participants aforementioned, athletic retirement was noted as causing a shift in focus, priority, and commitment, away from the pursuit of a professional hockey career and to satisfying the needs and interests of a spouse/family. Participants 05 and 17 best captured the nature of this shift, noting:

> I guess the thing that is different is I have a family now. I didn't have family - That's probably the biggest difference of all, is that I was probably a little bit more selfish with my life back when I played, and very much the fact that hockey took a priority over basically (everything else)… It's difficult because my family is very important to me, and being an older father has been good. It's given me

> time to spend time with my kids, and I'm sure, you know, seeing some of the dads who had kids in their 20s not being around as much for different events they have. So, family time, willing to share my time is important.
>
> - Participant 05

> Life, when you're playing hockey, is all about you. It was game day and non-game day, off-season and the season, and now the focus is on the family.
>
> - Participant 17

This shift was typically beneficial for participants as it provided a resolute purpose post-retirement.

Athletic retirement did, however, cause a state of disorientation in the marriages of at least two participants. In these marriages, the spouse was suggested to be unprepared for the change in identity and/or lifestyle that resulted from retirement. Participants 06 and 09 described the troubles they and their respective spouses experienced immediately following retirement, as well as the subsequent efforts that were made to dispel any rifts:

> … Post-hockey is probably just as hard, or harder, on a wife. I mean, they're out there kind of watching their hero - and that happened in our marriage - Here I was the hero, and the next year it ended up that my wife had a year-long affair with some guy (it is worth noting that the participant too had affairs). So here I'm a year out of hockey and then get hit with this.… This is all a part of my victim story bullshit, which I identified by doing programs like the Landmark program, and the Sterling Men's Weekend. Those have all been taking a look at what's going on inside of me, and how to get by some of these minefields that have hit

since hockey, or even hit during hockey. So I went to the Men's Weekend to see if I was going to stay married, and at that weekend I saw how much I loved my wife. And the fact is, as men, we tend to forget things, but we learn pretty quick, so by going and being a part of a men's team, and by working with men, you continue to work through these different barriers that come up, and learn to have a more functional and enjoyable life. Same thing with Men's Division International; it's got a little bit of a different take on it, but it's basically a part of the same group.... I mean, I've done tons of reflection on this stuff, and what's good now is we have a beautiful little girl, and I love my wife very, very much. I'm committed to our marriage, and, actually, I really like it this way.

- Participant 06

I called my wife and said that I was going to retire, and the first thing that came out of her mouth was, 'No you're not' (chuckles). I'm like, 'Honey, I can't do it any more.' To make a long story short, she said, 'Well don't come home right now. I'm not ready to have you back.' So I had some friends whom I went to high school with out there (where the participant was playing at the time) and I stayed out there for about a week, and then I came home and she said, 'I can't have you here. Go up to the cabin.' And we had hired a guy to remodel this cabin that I got, and he hadn't found anyone to help him with it, so I said, 'Well, my wife doesn't want me at home. I don't know anything about construction, but I'll work my ass off for you; you just got to teach me everything.' So I ended up not coming back - well, I mean came back, but I ended up working with him. I told her, 'What about this?' and she said, 'Yeah, I think that's a good idea.' So I spent the winter up

> there, and I'd either come home on weekends or she would come up there with the kids, and we just kind of - that's the transition. It wasn't like I came home and I was just figuring out shit that I had to do.... We had to kind of figure out who we were again, and that I wasn't going away - I was going to be home all the time. It was good because I was still gone, being up there (at the cabin), but then the second year I wasn't gone as much, and we kind of started figuring things out, and what direction we're going. And with two kids, you can't get self-absorbed too much; you got to really focus on them.
>
> - Participant 09

The shifts in social relationships experienced by participants were not, however, merely limited to within one's family.

For three of the 17 participants in the study, the end of a professional hockey career also resulted in a decreased sense of camaraderie. Participant 13 discussed this sentiment, and the importance he placed in attending alumni events:

> When people ask me what I miss about hockey, I say, 'Well, there's two things I miss about hockey: every second Thursday, and the camaraderie;' every second Thursday being pay day, and the camaraderie. I mean, we (he and his former teammates) get together - we have some functions, like our alumni golf outing, a big charity event in (NHL City). If I ever miss one, I probably won't get in because there's a waiting list for players to get in, just like there's a waiting list to get in for participants. I think the biggest thing is not about getting there and being part of it, it's about being a part of the guys you used to play with, the guys you used to suit up with, the guys you used to go to practice with, the guys you used to

> travel with, the guys you used to bitch with about getting in at 2:00 in the morning, the guys you used to take shit with from the coaching staff - I think one of the biggest things guys miss is the camaraderie.

For these participants, involvement in an alumni association and/or employment in a hockey-related career provided opportunities to fulfill this need for camaraderie.

As Participant 13 also noted, with athletic retirement came a change in financial security. Such a change was evident amongst participants whose careers predated an era in hockey in which the average annual player salary exceeded $200,000 (approximately 1990), as well as those whose careers came after. Participant 04, for example, whose career ended nearly three decades ago, was one of five participants in the study to speak of such a change. In relaying the importance of financial security, he spoke of this change:

> Financial is definitely the biggest change.... I think if you're prepared financially, you're mentally prepared. And I have always spent too much money, and when you're in a business like that (professional hockey), there's only a short period of time that you're going to make quite decent money, and you got to put some away; I don't care if it's a $100,000 or if you're making a $1,000,000. People making a $1,000,000, they're paying $400,000 in income taxes, so you've got to put some money away. And you got to be smart with your money. And you got to have control, or somebody, a professional, to help... I'm a big believer in having a good chartered accountant who has your interest in mind. They're going to bill you, and they should bill you - they're professionals; they've gone to school and

worked very, very hard - but you got to have good advisors, and people who are out for your best interests. I had some very, very good people that I worked with...

Participant 17 echoed these sentiments, and described how his first NHL team assisted in his financial planning (a form of problem-focused coping promoted by Taylor and Ogilvie (2001) and to be discussed in a subsequent subsection):

> When I started with (NHL Team One), they had a savings plan where you could defer up to half your salary - You couldn't touch it for 10 years; it was locked way. So I took advantage of that. And I was in (NHL City One) for almost four years, so I had four years of salary deferred, and each year was deferred for 10 years out. You couldn't touch that. You couldn't get at it. They guaranteed that it would at least double, if not do better, but what that allowed - Like my first year I made $85,000, and I could put up to half of that into the plan, and the (NHL Team One) would pay me the other half, and that's what I would pay tax on, the $42,500, not the $85,000... And my salary went up like from $85,000 to $125,000, to whatever it was, so each year you could put a little bit more away. So that was a good way to save. And then when I went to (NHL Team Two) and (NHL Team Three), it was all, 'How do I save money?' That's what prepared me or helped me with life after hockey because I thought - obviously my peak earning years - it's going to be tough to get a job to make what I made playing hockey. I wanted to live a lifestyle while I was playing that I could maintain after I was playing so I just tried to save.

In a similar vein, and as Participant 17 added, maintaining a relatively modest lifestyle (creating consistency between pre- and post-retirement environments; a point of discussion for two study participants) also positively affected quality of transition:

> I never knew when it (his professional hockey career) was going to end, so I didn't try to live beyond my means. I knew that it could end at any time, so I always tried to save and live a lifestyle that I could maintain when I was done playing hockey. I think it was a pretty normal lifestyle off the ice. It wasn't like, 'Oh my god, I had big houses, big cars, fast cars.' We never really did that. And maybe I never had the money to do it, or the confidence to do it, I don't know (both men laugh), but I never really thought I'd end up playing 12 years either. I was always kind of preparing for after, because early on - I mean, in my first year, there wasn't a lot of big money. Like it was good money, you didn't have to work in the summer, and you got to save some, but it wasn't that big; you still had to save and be practical with that.

Consistent with such remarks, it was found that participants who expressed a concern for, and practiced sound financial planning, when compared to those who did not, had fewer transition-related difficulties.

An equally common adjustment required of participants pertained to routine, as athletic retirement eliminated the need to maintain the rigid and standard schedule that accompanied a typical season. For Participant 11, this change was the most significant in his transition:

> I think the biggest transition when I stopped playing is you've got that set routine, you're always kind of gone, and I think it's a major adjustment being around the

> home, and having a home office. I know in talking with other guys, that's a huge challenge.

This "challenge," for five of the 17 participants, could be described as being one of re-conditioning or re-routinization. Participants 03 and 12, despite having differing responses to a loss in routine, spoke of this challenge:

> As a hockey player, there's a schedule: game day schedule, non-game day. From September to May, that's the season, and you know where your games are, your practices are; it's very regimented. And then when you retire from hockey - this is actually a pretty important part - when you retire from hockey, and you don't have the rink to go to, and you don't have a game to get ready for, you don't know what to do. Like if you've got a game, you got to get up by 8:00 so you can get breakfast and get to the rink by 9:00, and then you get back for your pre-game snooze, and then you got your meal, and then go back to the rink, and you just know it; that's your schedule. When you retire from hockey: get up at 7:00; get up at 9:00; if you're a single guy, you can get up at noon. There's nobody there to tell you - Then you wake up, and then what do you do? Where do you go? You know? You don't have a job, or you don't know what you're going to do with yourself. So one of the things that I had to adjust to was the fact that I made my own schedule; it wasn't dictated to me.
>
> - Participant 03

> Well, in the NHL, or anywhere you're playing pro hockey, you're on an itinerary. You wake up and someone will hand you a piece of paper, and tell you where to be: you've got to be here, at this time, you have to do this, and you have to do

> that… All of a sudden, I'm beating my own drum. I don't have to answer to anybody. I can do whatever I want, when I want, and to tell you quite honestly, I loved it. There would be days where I knew that if I was playing hockey I'd have to be up at 8:00 in the morning, and I'd be sweating so hard, working so hard in the gym, or on the ice, or somewhere, and then all of a sudden I would wake up and look at my clock and it would be 9:00 and go, 'God, I can just chill for another hour or so.' And that's exactly what I did, almost to the point where you get a little bit bored sometimes. But the fact that I didn't have to do it for the first six or seven months was just pure heaven… Because your whole life you're told, 'You have to do this. You have to do that. You've got to be in shape.' Well, now no one's telling you nothing…. So you can take it two ways: you can just be lazy, sit on your ass, and not do anything ever; or you can figure out, 'What's the next transition in my life? Alright, I'm excited about what's going to happen outside of hockey now.' And then you get the flipside with guys who don't know anything else, and aren't motivated to do anything else beside hockey, and fortunately for me, I'm not like that. I wanted to find out what the next stage of my life was going to be.
>
> - Participant 12

For Participant 03, among others, the ability to successfully transition to a life after hockey required a process of re-routinization:

> I'll turn everything into a scheduled thing for work now. If I start work at this time, then I have to be at work at this time, so I have to leave at this time, so I have to get up at this time, and that gets me back to being a little bit more

> comfortable.... probably just going into a comfort zone where that's what you're used to.

Although challenges pertaining to routine generally stood resolved, others did not.

For Participants 08 and 17, for example, retirement resulted in the loss of clearly identifiable goals. As the pair explained, the ability to formulate goals, in a context other than professional hockey, has proved to be a challenge:

> I'm still working on one thing (in transitioning to a life after professional hockey). When I played, my goal was to make the NHL - I was always goal-driven - and now, I'm just working, and I don't really have any set goals... I don't think I understand my new life and what I'm going to get out of it. I knew what I wanted to do as a hockey player, what I had to do, but... (pauses) I'm [simply] working.
>
> - Participant 08

> I guess the downside (of a life outside professional hockey) is you don't have that measurement of a game, 'Hey, we prepared all week, we went out, we played, and did we win or did we lose, and we're on to the next one.' It's just week after week after week of - How do you measure, 'Oh, I had a good season this year, like a good six months?' What the heck did I do? I shovelled the driveway eight times, and raked the leaves, and whatever.
>
> - Participant 17

The inability to resolve an adjustment of this sort did not however seem to cause participants any excessive stress.

In retiring from professional hockey, and experiencing a subsequent change in lifestyle, participants also confronted a unique set of identity-related challenges.

Participants 09 and 10, for example, aptly captured the state of disorientation that existed in relation to their respective identities following athletic retirement (a potential consequence of athletic retirement reported by, among others, Grove et al. (1997) and Lavallee and Robinson (2007)):

> I felt like… (pauses) a guy on the island of misfit toys, so to speak (chuckles lightly), where I didn't know how I was going to fit into this world.
>
> - Participant 09

> You did something since you were eight years old, and you get around 34, 35, and all of a sudden it's just taken away from you. You're like, 'What?' You lose your identity, and that's what happened to me a little bit. I didn't know who I was any more. That's all I had ever been, was a hockey guy. 'What am I going to be now?'
>
> - Participant 10

Quite commonly, such disorientation resulted in a form of identity crisis, a process by which an individual responds to a deficiency or ambiguity in identity (including in the goals, values, and beliefs inherent thereof) with exploration (Erikson, 1959; Waterman, 1984).[13]

As a part of such exploration, participants (nine of the 13 aforementioned) commonly sought to substitute the identity, satisfaction, and/or purpose derived from one pursuit (i.e., a career in hockey) with that of some alternative. Participant 02, who after many years of "searching" found just such an alternative (in public speaking), described the nature of his exploration:

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[13] Although capable of causing distress, an identity crisis is not inherently negative (Erikson, 1959).

> I don't think you'll ever get a job where it's like playing in the NHL, because it's such a great ride to play professional hockey, or any professional sport. I never was really interested in coaching, so I got out of the game, but I think you're always searching… you're searching for something to satisfy yourself, whether you want to contribute financially, to make money, or morally, to make a contribution to life somehow.

Participants 04 and 14 similarly spoke of attempts to 'find a niche' following retirement:

> You never know what you want. I always loved cars so I thought, 'Oh, this is what I want to do.' Well, I was only in there six months and I knew I didn't want to do it. I sold radio advertising for three years, and then I realized in selling radio advertising you're never going to make a lot of money because it's a piece of pie, and you only have so many minutes a week, and you're out of business. In my business now, solving problems for people, I have tens of millions of dollars of inventory. I have so much inventory it's unbelievable, where in that business you didn't have inventory. So it's finding what you want, and finding your niche, and then running with it.
>
> - Participant 04

> (The transition) is something where you have to find your niche. You have to find something that you enjoy doing…You have to love your job to be able to get up and go to work every day, and enjoy it. I'm fortunate that I got involved in coaching and I loved it. I worked in sales for four years and I actually quite enjoyed it. But where I am now (in sport broadcasting), I love my job. Any given night you go to a game, and you talk to General Managers, pro scouts, different

> guys like that… You've got your finger on the pulse of the game and it's kind of cool. As I said, to me, I don't consider it a job; it's just an extension of a career in hockey, and I'm very fortunate for that.
>
> - Participant 14

As the previous comments insinuate, participants typically came to discover a new identity only after considering, attempting, and subsequently rejecting some alternative(s). The experiences of Participants 05 and 12, among others, were emblematic of just such a practice:

> The fact is now here's me, been involved with hockey, a big part of my life - had played, worked for the (NHL Team). What was my next step? Did I want to stay involved with the game? Did I want to leave the game? That's probably where the transition really started for me… Staying involved in the game was great, and what I really enjoyed, but I thought, 'Is this what I really want to do the rest of my life?' I was 37-years old, and, 'Did I want to continue on this road?' My dad felt I should get involved in the financial managing business, so I thought, 'You know what, I'll take a financial course.' Got the insurance course. Got my license. I worked for a company called (Company One) for a short term, and then I was offered an opportunity to work for a huge financial company called (Company Two), but it wasn't for me…. I probably gave it (financial management) an opportunity, but I knew it wasn't me. But yeah, this (his current occupation, in hockey) is what I enjoy.
>
> - Participant 05

> I didn't know what I was going to do (after retiring from professional hockey), and so I was searching around, and I tried some hockey. I tried to get away entirely out of hockey, where I was involved in a charter service, but I didn't really enjoy it. But I was able to find out exactly what I wanted to do, and what I liked, and what I didn't like, and the fact that I knew things that I didn't like I was able to cross certain things off my 'What I like/What I don't like' list. Eventually, it brought me back to I like the business world, I like being involved in business, but let's make sure that business is something that I'm kind of interested in, as opposed to something that's just going to pay a dollar or two.
>
> - Participant 12

The success with which a participant was able to manage the exploration process, and discover a source of identification post-retirement, determined, to a large extent, the quality of one's transition.

In a similar vein, and consistent with existent research (e.g., Chambers, 2002; Grove et al., 1997; Webb et al., 1998), participants with a broad-based identity (i.e., multiple interests) experienced a rather quick adaptation to a post-playing life. Of the 17 participants in the study, three (Participants 01, 03, and 13) exemplified individuals with such an identity. Participant 01, for example, described a long-standing interest in teaching, one that provided a point of direction prior to and following a career in hockey:

> When I was a teenager, I worked at day camps and different things like that. I taught at hockey schools - The first hockey school in Canada, I taught there in the summer time. I knew I had a skill in teaching and I really enjoyed it. I knew what my career plan was going to be. It was going to be: be a teacher, work my way up

> to be a principal at some stage - but I played hockey because I loved it, and because there was senior hockey around… But I knew I could be a good teacher and that was what I relied on, and that was going to be my career path…. (Following retirement) I got into coaching... I thought it (coaching Junior hockey) would be really a wonderful experience, but it wasn't. It was not a good experience. I didn't enjoy it at all, nor did the family. I always felt I was lucky in that I had a dream about coaching, as many ex-players have, and I had the opportunity to get at it right off the bat, and the fact that it was a failure was the best thing that could have ever happened to me because it was, 'God, I'm not really very good at this. How can I expect to become an NHL coach if I'm really not that good at it? Well I can't expect that (hits hand swiftly on the table). What was I always good at? Teaching. Let's get back to teaching again.'

Participant 03 described a similar interest for sport broadcasting, and ventured into the occupation following athletic retirement:

> I took business management (in university) and had a concentration in marketing, which is, I got to tell you, a little bit strange because I always wanted to be a sports broadcaster, or at least in mind I figured I was going to play pro hockey and then get into sports broadcasting; that was just the plan.... I just kept watching it on TV, and seeing guys talk about hockey, and thinking, 'I can do that.' And I knew about the game… My goal, with what I'm doing with my life, is find something I like to do, that I'd probably do for free, and then find a way to get paid for it, that way it doesn't feel like a job. So what I'm doing now is work, it

> takes a lot of time out of my schedule, but it's enjoyable work, so it doesn't feel much like work.

The effects of a comparatively narrow identity, one focused on hockey, was, however, somewhat more indistinct.

For example, when accounting for the negative characterization of a playing career, a narrow identity was found to have a detrimental effect on quality of transition. Consistent with this finding, Botterill (1982) explained that for athletes with a narrow identity,

> self-worth is almost totally dependent on their ability/success in performing their particular sport. Even if such a person's self-concept is extremely positive as an athlete, its narrowness makes them extremely psychologically vulnerable to any fluctuation or decline in performance. (p. 146)

Participants 02, 06, and 10, who appeared to represent the retired equivalent of the athlete previously described, all provided a relatively negative characterization of their respective NHL careers (all three were also waived throughout the league), and experienced significant periods of difficulty following athletic retirement. The pronounced effect of these negative characterizations could, however, be best illustrated by comparing Participants 02 and 05, two men who shared strikingly similar biographies,[14] but experienced dissimilar transitions (with Participant 02 expressing greater difficulty in adjusting to a post-playing life) and provided drastically disparate perceptions of their respective playing careers:

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[14] Both participants: achieved great success in Junior hockey, had multiple seasons of scoring 20 or more goals, and had their careers end prematurely (one (Participant 02) due to deselection caused by difficulties with a sporting bureaucracy, and the other (Participant 05) due to an injury).

I don't think I was very successful as an NHL hockey player. There were big expectations that I don't think I met. And when I tell people that, they say, 'Well, that's everybody's dream to go and play in the NHL,' but when you're there, you've made the dream, now you have to stay there. Like I said, I had a couple of 20-goal seasons with (NHL Team One). In (NHL Team Two), I was in a learning curve there, and then just like that, it's gone. I mean, I played in only (several hundred) games, in (number; less than 10) years in the NHL, so I don't characterize it as being a successful career, at all, actually.

- Participant 02

Here was me, probably at the top of my game… (providing specific statistics) I scored more goals later in my career than I did early, and I scored in the 20s, low 20s - I'm not bitter, and I think some guys get to be bitter, and the fact is that they want to play longer, and they got screwed because of this, or screwed because of that, and this guy didn't like him. To me, it's a privilege. I'm one of the blessed few who had a chance to play in the National Hockey League, and I've got no bitterness. I mean, I could be bitter over my injury, but I'm not. It's part of the business that you play: you could get hurt, you could get injured… But I'm not bitter. And I think you have to move on from any type of negativity and, 'The game wasn't good to me.' Well, 'You're one of the chosen 6000 people who ever played a game in the National Hockey League,' is the way I look at it, and feel very fortunate with that.

- Participant 05

Participant 06, who experienced the most difficult transition of any participant, spoke of such bitterness (i.e., a negative characterization of one's career) in relation to his own struggles:

> The insight (from the interview process) is that I still am carrying some baggage around this whole thing. You know, it's been 22 years since I left the NHL, and there are still some things that I maybe resent or… (pauses) and it's just a matter of you need to let that go… That's the way I'd like to finish because, shit, just at times, I don't know - It (the transition) ought to be easier…

The negative or unfulfilled feelings surrounding one's career appeared to also impair the ability of participants (particularly the three participants aforementioned) to find comparable satisfaction in an occupation following athletic retirement. Participant 06, again, spoke of this inability:

> I never realized how difficult it would be to find something that would replace the thrill of scoring a goal, which could actually give me that kind of satisfaction. I spent a little bit of time with real estate, and I thought that I'd enjoy selling real estate, and when I got into - I'd probably be okay with it now more, but when I got out of hockey I so much missed it that I remember the very first time I sold a house it did almost nothing for me. I knew that day I was in trouble as far as real estate went.

Interestingly, Participants 06 and 10 suggested that comparable satisfaction could be attained in rejoining the NHL in a coaching capacity. Participant 10, in particular, noted that a return to the NHL may result in the culmination of his 20-year transition:

> No, I don't think it (the transition) has [ended]. I think I've been in a mid-life crisis since I was like 28, and I'm 53. So, no, I don't think it has ended, really. I still want to get back in the real game, that's why I met with (Current NHL General Manager). I'd like to get a minor - I really feel like I was born to be a coach.... I think that [returning to the NHL] would be very fulfilling to me. I don't even know if I need to get to the NHL, but I don't want to stay at the level I'm at.

The inability to find comparable satisfaction in an occupation following athletic retirement represented another of the commonalities shared by the three participants whose transitions were deemed to be most difficult. The transitions of two of these participants were eased, however, when their respective careers were reframed in positive terms. In these ways, and consistent with the work of Cecic Erpic et al. (2004), the quality of a transition was found to be highly dependent on the subjective evaluation of one's career (and consequently, perhaps, a narrow identity).

Although detrimental in one regard, the adoption of a hockey-centric identity was also found to be beneficial for participants, particularly in arousing a heightened level of personal satisfaction. Of the 17 participants in the study, six denoted this effect. Participant 06, for example, who, as aforementioned, experienced an immense struggle in his transition, credited his recent rejuvenation to his involvement in hockey:

> The last thing I'd kind of like to say is that maybe it is okay for guys, when they transition, to stay in hockey. For a long time, I attempted to see whether I could do something outside of hockey, and I'm sure it was possible, and yet there was just something about that I'd love to stay in hockey. And so now I'm teaching

> hockey, and public speaking. You know, in this transition, maybe I can actually affect things outside of hockey, but still from the foundation of hockey.

Participant 16, whose playing career was immediately followed by a stint as a professional coach, described a similar affinity for the sport, and explained why he recently left a position in sales to again become a coach:

> I left hockey, for all intents and purposes... and by the fifth year [in sales] my wife was looking at me, 'God, you're a miserable cuss. Would you please go back to hockey?' You know, I left hockey to stay home, because I made them (his family) move all the time. We were moving here, moving there, and my daughter was going into high school, and it was not the time to take her up, and take her away from her friends. 'Okay, you've done everything for me. I'm staying here. We're staying here.' But it's huge for me to have hockey in my life. I was miserable without it. I didn't know I was miserable because things were great for a couple of years. They were great. Money was coming in, bonuses, and travelling - It was cool, but at the same time it really wasn't me. It wasn't what I do, or it wasn't the love of my life. Aside from my wife, and my daughter, and my dog, hockey is it, and when things weren't going well with the other job, it really, really sunk home that hockey is really where I desire to be. 'So what do you want to do?' 'I want to be in hockey. I want to make a living somehow with hockey.'

The transitions of participants thus appeared to be complicated not solely by a narrow identity, but by an inability to overcome a state of identity-related disorientation. Such a suggestion would reaffirm Pearson and Petitpas's (1990) call to athletes to engage in identity exploration activities.

Other participants also acknowledged that the adoption and/or exploitation of a hockey-related identity could be used to provide an occupational advantage. Participants 13 and 14 explained:

> … I think the hockey has allowed me to transition - my name, to get me into doors, to see people - it's allowed me to do that. It's allowed me to do other things as well, to have the numbers that I have out there. As my brother said, 'Where is my name going to do me more good?' If I have to walk in and see an owner, like I'm going to do with this deal here (discussed in the course of the interview), I'm going to walk in and see the owner. I'm not afraid to walk in front of people. And I'll walk in with an NHL Alumni or (NHL Team) golf shirt on - I don't always wear my company logo shirt - I'll walk in and they'll see - Sometimes some of the owners will mention, 'Oh, are you hockey fan?' I'll say, 'I used to play,' and that opens a line of communication. We find some common ground, we talk.
>
> - Participant 13

> I did a lot of work with (various types of organizations)… It was fun because you worked with a lot of real genuine guys. The (Association Name), did a lot of work with them, and as associate members you had a lot of different functions and things like that. I like to talk with people and whatever, and when they know that you're an ex-hockey player, guys would know who you were and they always wanted - especially during the hockey season, everyone wanted to know, 'What's going on with the (NHL Team)?' It was a way, a lot of times, of breaking the ice when it came to working with people, and meeting new people, and whatnot.
>
> - Participant 14

In only one instance did such an identity hinder the occupational prospects of a participant. Participant 08 explained:

> I retired in a time where the salaries in the NHL were in the millions. Like, I made enough money to be comfortable, but not to be able to sit on my ass for the rest of my life. And most of the jobs I wouldn't get, even though I thought I was qualified, and it's because they thought, 'Yeah, I don't think you want a $60,000 job.' I would take $60,000 any time; that's my golf money. No (joking; researcher laughs). No, but they wouldn't give me that job because, as they said, 'You might get bored in two months. We've seen that before.' And you know, I would go to two or three interviews, get re-interviewed, and, 'they're not comfortable.' I thought being a hockey player would open me doors. It kind of opened just to get in the door, but they had notions that we all made $2-3,000,000 and it's just a side job for us. 'No, I really want to work.'

The adjustment of participants to a post-playing occupation also presented difficulties unrelated to one's identity.

For three of the 17 study participants, such difficulties pertained to work culture/environment. Participant 08, again, described office culture as being fraught with "politics," "backstabbing," "jealousy," "tension," and "bickering" (i.e., "lacking the same concept of a hockey team"):

> The thing with that job was I was with another guy in an office, and we basically controlled our own time, but we had to report... Even though we were in (City), there were a couple of satellite places, and we all got together for meetings and things like that, and the politics in the workforce, the backstabbing, and in the

> end, the jealousy, 'He doesn't need that job; those guys are rich.' I'm very easy to get along with, but things were happening: a client made a complaint against me, I was working on a business plan - it's a long story - I also had a problem with a colleague. I thought we were getting along, but he would carve me up to my clients. When I wasn't in the office, my client would drop by with some questions, and he would say, 'Oh, the hockey player's not going to work for you because' blah blah blah, and 'Oh, he's not that smart. He's only good at sports,' and things like that.... And with my [new] job now, I get along well with the people, but I work alone. Sometimes I go over to the main office for meetings, or work, and I see the tension, the bickering, and I say, 'I don't know if I want that any more.' They don't have the same concept of a hockey team; you know, you don't have to like everybody, but we know the code, and we know we need to get along to get [results]. And I get along with everybody in the office over the phone. I'm easy to deal with. I do my job and I get the results. But I don't think I could go and work in an office. There's no way now. I can't trust people. I can't. People could be desperate. They want advancement, and they'd be willing to step on you.

Participant 14, alternatively, found the physical inactivity involved with a previous sales job to be rather unsettling:

> I actually thoroughly enjoyed my job. I had a lot of freedom with my job, where I made my own schedule. I hated being in the office more than two days a week because I just found sitting in the office drove me crazy; like I'd get stir crazy. I'd have to go at lunch time to like a sporting good store and walk around for an hour

> just to get away from the office, because sitting at a desk and making phone calls to set up appointments and things like that - that part I didn't enjoy.

Participant 17, finally, noted the effect of his palpably late entrance into "Corporate America":

> I did that internship at (Company), and day one or day two, whatever it was - There were 40 people doing the internship, and we're all together in this room and we had to stand up and introduce yourself, and it's all these kids from Yale, Boston College, Boston University, Providence, Dartmouth - you know, every school I had heard of, and it was like, 'Hi, I'm (Participant's Name). I played in the NHL.' Now, I had years on them, which was experience, but still - This is what I found, or an observation, when I got into (Company) I was 34-35 years old, just starting out as a Product Development Manager, and all the guys, like my bosses, were my age or younger. You know, they've been these wiz kids coming out of these great schools, and started at 24 or 25, and by the time they're in their 30s they're the Directors and the Managers and stuff. It's like, 'Wow.' (Company) had a young culture and I felt - I was fortunate I played long enough... I kind of felt, 'Wow. There's a point where you enter Corporate America, you're almost too old.' You know? And maybe that's why I didn't really end up staying there; I just didn't see the career path taking off the way I maybe had thought previously. With that, I think kids who are career minor leaguers - You know what? You're going to have to get a job some time, and if you can start at 30, or before 30, you're better off than stretching it well into your 30s because when you do go into that workforce you're going to be behind and it's tough to make it up.

The success with which a participant was able to transition to an occupation following athletic retirement was typically dependent upon: the relationship of that occupation to the sport of hockey, or the education/training (forms of problem-focused coping that, again, will be discussed in a subsequent subsection) that preceded employment.

Another of the factors affecting the transitions of participants pertained to physical/psychological maintenance. Stephan, whose previous research (Stephan & Bilard, 2003; Stephan et al., 2007) was among the first to consider the physical (psychophysical) repercussions resulting from athletic retirement, suggested that athletes may suffer decreased levels of physical satisfaction (and as a consequence, global self-esteem) as they manoeuvre away from a sport. Of the 17 participants in this study, two spoke of a concern for physical maintenance (i.e., exercise, diet). Participant 11, for example, listed physical conditioning amongst his greatest transition-related challenges:

> One of the things you take for granted is your physical shape. I was spending so much time trying to get going in my next career that I found it hard to get a workout in and keep up my conditioning - not that it was really important in any professional sense, but just health wise. I'm a dedicated family guy, so any extra I have I put in with my family. So, that was one challenge right away, was to find that time to stay athletic and healthy.

Participant 10, alternatively, spoke of his efforts to maintain a sound physical state:

> Me, I'm very into yoga. I'm in better shape now, probably, than I was when I played. I mean, I'm not an angel, but I'm not like I used to be, and I do a lot of yoga, a lot of cardio, a little bit of weight training, and it makes me feel good. It's just a great thing to do every day, for an hour and a half, or two hours, and it's

> kind of become a real habit for me. So I would say (as a recommendation to players), 'Start thinking about that, because there's going to be a lot of injuries that you don't know about in your body, that are going to come out when you retire. There's going to be muscle trauma and things you don't feel now, but as you get older you will, and the quicker you start - especially the flexibility - the better off you're going to be as a 53-year old.' I see some guys who are younger than me who are hobbling around, and they can't bend down because their backs are all messed up. Some of it's just from severe injury, but some of it is they didn't take care of themselves later on in life and they just kind of let it go.

Amongst participants, a concern for physical maintenance was, however, generally lacking. Given such lack of concern, it can be discerned that the physical adjustment of participants (to post-playing life) was relatively unproblematic.

An exception to this assertion did present itself in the form of post-concussion syndrome, a disorder, resulting from traumatic injury to the brain, capable of causing both physical and psychological debilitation. Of the 17 participants in this study, at least three sustained a concussion in the course of a professional hockey career. Participant 06 was one of these three and spoke to the extremely damaging effects of the disorder:

> Part of my transition that's been tough, and I believe they're starting to see this, is I incurred a number of concussions when I played.... I would say the concussions had a lot to do with perhaps depression. I went through some terrible depression at times, and I'm actually on an anti-depression medication nowadays. And for years there were just real black clouds... really black. I mean, at times, I used to spend...

> (pauses) Many thoughts about suicide… Like at times, you're just sitting there and you'd just break down crying; the situation just seems so hopeless.

For Participant 06, the improper treatment of the disorder (in that there was not any) resulted in severe and negative repercussions, the likes of which have undermined his ability to achieve satisfaction in a post-playing life. Participant 12 similarly spoke of sustaining a concussion, and described the importance of receiving proper treatment:

> I had post-concussion syndrome for probably nine months. It took a whole year out of my (professional hockey career). Basically, it ended my NHL career, because I played - The year that it happened was my first full year of being up in the NHL, and I established myself as a regular NHL player, and all of a sudden I got knocked out. I had this concussion and I couldn't do anything because everyday I was in a depression, when I was playing. Like, had a concussion knocked me out and I never played hockey again, I'm sure my story would be a lot different, because when you have a concussion, you get into the biggest state of depression. You wake up every morning trying to shake the cobwebs, and you see if you're normal or not, and every time you wake up and it's not, you know you're not normal, and you just want to go back to bed and not do anything. You had zero motivation. You wanted nothing to do with anybody. You didn't want to talk to anybody. You just wanted to sit there, and it takes a long time to recover from that… If you've never gone through it, you're not going to know it. It played a big role in my passion to play again because I lost the passion when I had my concussion. I was like, 'Oh god, I don't want to do this any more.' It's almost like it zaps that drive out of you. You're getting knocked around and then you realize

> that hockey's not that important, but your brain is, because you're like, 'Am I going to be a vegetable here? I can't even think. I'm forgetting things that I normally never forget. Like, what's going on with my brain right now?' And I still have a couple of residual effects from the concussion. I have a little bit of short-term memory - Not bad, but I hear other stories from guys, and it's tough. But if you let that run your life, you've given up. But everyone's symptoms and the way they react after they have the concussion are different. Mine was a pretty severe one, but I was able to rebound, and I feel 100% now.... I was a pretty unique case because I was one of the real first case studies of this prolonged post-concussion that the NHL hadn't really had, and I ended up being a big case study for the NHL... I think my concussion was the one that got the NHL more in tune with doing more pre- and post-tests with everybody; that's what they tell me at least. But I've had nothing but positive experiences.

As the two participants explained, the severity of the disorder and the treatment thereof had a pronounced effect (amongst the greatest of any factor) on quality of transition.

Resources Affecting Transition

Also affecting the transitions of participants was the utilization of any number of available resources. As aforementioned, these resources may be categorized as being personal, social, or institutional in nature. The participants' use of these resources (or lack thereof) and the resulting effects are subsequently delineated.

In preparation for, or in response to a transition, participants typically employed a variety of coping strategies (i.e., resources personally available to the participant). To reiterate, these coping strategies may be classified in one of three categories: problem-

focused (a category that accounts for those processes that purposefully attempt to alter the situation causing distress), emotion-focused (a category that accounts for those processes that serve to regulate distress), and avoidance-oriented (a category that accounts for those processes that assist in distancing an individual, psychologically or otherwise, from a stressor) (Carver et al., 1989; Endler & Parker, 1990; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, 1991; Grove et al., 1997; Zeidner & Saklofske, 1996). Generally, problem- and emotion-focused strategies served greater benefit to participants than avoidance-oriented alternatives.

The coping strategy most commonly discussed by participants was that of pre-retirement planning, a problem-focused initiative that consists of such activities as psychological preparation, financial planning, career exploration, and continued education. As aforementioned, and consistent with existent research (e.g., Alfermann et al., 2004; Chambers, 2002; Grove et al., 1997; Stambulova et al., 2007), pre-retirement planning, specifically in the form of financial planning and career exploration, was found to positively affect quality of transition. The effect of a continued education, alternatively, could be described as being similarly positive, but less pronounced.

In coming to this assessment of continued education (in relation to the transitions of participants), it is worth noting that of the nine participants with post-secondary schooling, only five obtained a degree prior to athletic retirement, and of those, only two work(ed) in the same field as their degree. Interestingly, the value of continued education was more pronounced amongst the eight participants without any post-secondary schooling. Of these eight, five spoke of an occupational limitation that followed athletic retirement. Participant 04 was one of these five:

> Well, I believe that after a life of professional sports it's either sales or owning your own business, because we don't have a lot of other skills. We are unlike football players, or basketball players, or baseball players, or golfers, who usually go to university. In our case, in the '60s, you'd usually finish Grade 12 and that would be it. And before that, a lot of people never even finished Grade 12. So you don't have a lot of skills. You're not a professional. You don't have a Master's degree. There was the odd guy who had a degree, but not many... Most of the players didn't have the proper education to be a professional, to be a teacher... so it's sales or owning your own business.

Conversely, among those with some level of university education, no such limitations were noted. In this discrepancy was the positive effect of continued education most apparent.

In a similar vein, occupational training, although not generally undertaken prior to athletic retirement, was also well regarded amongst the participants. Five of the 17 study participants spoke of receiving such training (in a context outside of the Life After Hockey program), and of these five, Participant 13 provided the greatest endorsement of the practice:

> Let's face it; we come out of hockey training for what? We're not trained for anything else outside of hockey. Unless you came out of college with a degree - which back then most of us didn't come from college, we came from Major Junior A, and we don't have an education behind our name. I know guys who went into the NHL, and left the NHL, and to this day they probably still have a Grade 10 education. The question is what do they want to do and what investment do they

> want to make in it? I was a big advocate - I put myself through a Dale Carnegie sales course. I paid $1000 to put myself through it. I knew I needed to learn something, learn how to do something. When I went into the car business, one of the conditions I had with the company I went to work for was they needed to teach me how to sell a car. Don't hand me the keys and say, 'There's the new and there's the used.' 'You need to show me how to sell a car.' I'm a real advocate of getting trained, and being trained, and always upgrading my training. Anytime a manufacturer or somebody had a program, I was always the first to sign up for it, and I'm that way now with the Life After Hockey [program]. If there's something there that interests me, I'm doing it. In fact, there are some things in there I wouldn't mind taking a refresher course on because I know it's only going to make me better, and make me stronger, and make me more marketable.

For those without post-secondary schooling, occupational training typically represented a vital necessity.

In all, nine of the 17 study participants recalled feeling unprepared for athletic retirement. Participants, most commonly, attributed this feeling to a lack of education and/or occupational prospects, as well as a change in lifestyle. The comments of Participants 02 and 10 were emblematic of these sentiments:

> I wasn't prepared for what happened after - You miss that routine, and the day to day stuff that you do all the time. You miss the guys whom you played with terribly. So, I wasn't very prepared at all. I didn't want to go to university. If I wanted, I could have went on a hockey scholarship and got an education that way. And in hindsight - my brother, who went to (American University), married the

> dean's daughter, has two kids, one's already graduated from (American University) and the other one's in his senior year, and his alumni are all associates whom he knows very well, and business dealings - It's a different way to go, but it might have been an option that maybe I should have looked harder at. But, that's the decision I made. I have a pretty good work ethic, meaning that I'm not afraid to work 40 or 50 hours a week to get a pay cheque… but I didn't have a university degree or any college degree. So I went into sales, and it went alright. I tried a couple of other things that were mediocre, at best…
>
> - Participant 02

> Not prepared at all. Absolutely not prepared. Had no degree. Didn't know what I wanted to do. Wanted to be in hockey, that's all I knew. I knew I wanted to be in hockey.
>
> - Participant 10

Insight into the lack of pre-retirement planning or preparation on the part of participants was provided by Participant 03, who reflected on his efforts to avoid such exercises:

> I found that if I was focused on something then that's where I would be able to excel, and if I started focusing on life after hockey that, in some way, it might come sooner than I like. And I'm pretty good when I'm focused on one thing; I get torn when I have to branch off into other things. The only way that I prepared for life after hockey was investing my money as I was making it, a kind of financial cushion. But as I explained to you, it wasn't a financial cushion so that when I finished hockey I could just sit on my butt and spend everything I made; it was a financial cushion in case I needed that because nothing else would happen

> after hockey. And I guess, in a way, I was preparing for life after hockey by investing my money, but at the time, it didn't feel like that. I never sat there and thought, 'Oh, if my career ends next year, at least I've got this much in the bank.' There's so much involved in playing pro hockey that, at least for me, I didn't have the mental capacity to think about what to do afterwards.

Participant 15, conversely, refuted this position and implored future generations of players to plan for athletic retirement:

> Look for that move ahead. You know when I had that one second, when I was allowed to hang on to the puck, when I felt it was going to be coming from him, I was already looking to see where it was going. You know, you got to look ahead. I believe you have to try to prepare a little bit for the future. It's an old cliché, but the fact of the matter is eventually we're all going to be there; all of these players are going to be alumni at some time, sooner probably than later for a lot of them. Anything you can do to make yourself smarter - You know, when I was a kid, I had a scholarship to go to (American University), and I didn't take it. I wish I had. You know, played hockey and went to school for four years, and got a BA or something. Instead, I played here, for the (Junior Team), got my teeth knocked out in one of my first games, took a bunch of stitches, and really got hurt in junior - more injuries in junior than I did in pro.... When I was playing back then, we didn't think anything; we played golf in the summer and went to training camp to get in shape... We were lazy back then; all we wanted to do was play golf. I wish the players would think about that while they're still playing, getting more prepared for when the time comes that hockey is over.

Pre-retirement planning, or the lack thereof, was thus found to have among the most significant impacts on quality of transition of any factor or resource.

The only other problem-focused coping strategy referenced by a participant was that of acceptance. Participant 16 was the only participant in the study to discuss the strategy and spoke of it in relation to his final season in professional hockey:

> Was I prepared (for athletic retirement)? Was it, 'Okay, at the end of this year I'm going to be finished'? No, it was a realization, and that was when that kid pulled away from me. I said, 'Okay, my real hockey days are over. This kid's pulling away from me. There's no way I'm ever going to get back to the NHL.' I'm not going to lie to you, my first year as a player-Assistant Coach with (NHL Team) I kind of hoped that my career would follow where (NHL Player)'s did, where he did it for a year and then moved on - somebody grabbed him and added him to their roster. I kind of had that in the back of my mind, 'Maybe that will work for me.' The next year, it got that much further away from that dream. And then when that kid pulled away from me, I said, 'It's time to really think about this.' So there wasn't any farewell tour. Nobody was giving me motorcycles or anything like that (both the participant and researcher laugh). It was a realization, and hey, life, that's what it was.

For Participant 16, this "realization" (i.e., accepting the state of his professional hockey career) not only quelled any continued wishful thinking (an avoidance-oriented coping strategy used by three of the study participants (to the detriment of their transitions)), but also provided the impetus to pursue a subsequent career. In this way, acceptance had a beneficial effect on the participant's quality of transition.

Of the various emotion-focused coping strategies utilized by participants, two were most prominent: positive reinterpretation, and venting of emotions. Five of the 17 study participants provided an example of positive reinterpretation (the quotation of Participant 12 on pages 125-126 best represents the use of this strategy), and one of venting of emotions. Participant 09 was the lone individual to speak of the latter:

> Any time I had a problem - and that's what I had learned through my (university) major, is not to keep it in. You got to talk about it, and try to figure it out, and nip it in the bud, and you eliminate a lot of the self talk, or self doubt.

In each instance, the use of these strategies was done to the benefit of a participant's transition.

Participants also acknowledged the use of four different avoidance-oriented coping strategies: distraction; mental and behavioural disengagement; alcohol and/or substance abuse; and the aforementioned wishful thinking (strategies consistent with the work of Grove et al. (1997)). Among these strategies, the one most beneficial to participants was that of distraction. Participant 17 was one of seven to reference a distraction in relation to athletic retirement, and noted the benefit thereof:

> The best thing that happened was I went to work right away. I was actually working at (Company) that summer that I thought I was still going to play. When it became official that I wasn't going to play, I was working full-time at (Company), and I was so out of my element.... (The occupation) was a struggle all the way along, but it kept me so busy, and I had to work so hard at being good at it, that I didn't have time to sit around and read the papers or watch a lot of games. At the same time I was getting my fill of hockey through my kids. My

> kids were playing youth hockey and I was watching them. Spending time in the rink, spending time at work, I wasn't - There was no idle time to sit there and say, 'Oh my god, I can't believe I'm not playing. What's that guy playing for?' and 'Oh geez, that guy just signed for x number of dollars.' There was no time to feel sorry for myself.... It was great to have a job to keep me occupied so I wasn't thinking of all - I loved my time in the NHL. I loved the guys I played with. Everything about it, it was a blast, and I'd do it again, but when I was out of it, I didn't want to - I wanted to keep all those great memories great. I never wanted to become bitter with the game of hockey, but I know there are guys who didn't enjoy their last few years of hockey, or had tough times after, and I didn't want to be like that. I got so many great things out of playing... And working hard to have a life after hockey, for my kids, my wife, my family, and myself, and that was undoubtedly - even though I was making $33,000 plus benefits at (Company) - it was the best thing for me, in keeping my sanity.

Where the immediacy of other work and the resultant distraction had a positive effect on quality of transition, other avoidance-oriented coping strategies had less so.

The use of mental and behavioural disengagement, for example, had a rather ambivalent effect. Participants 02 and 07, who were the only two in the sample to provide an example of this strategy's use, described their (ultimately unsuccessful) attempts to distance themselves from hockey following athletic retirement:

> When I first quit hockey, retired from the NHL, I didn't play - They had an Oldtimers' team going around and I said, 'No, I'm not interested in playing.' I was still bitter. They just said, 'Come on out, you'll like it. We understand you're

mad. You're a young man. You should still be playing.' 'No, I'm not coming out.' And then finally I did, and I had an absolute ball. They were right, but you had to get over that hurdle where you're angry at the NHL, or whoever you're angry at, or yourself. So, they wanted me to come out, and then once I started coming out, I said, 'Yeah, this is good. You're raising some money'.... We raise a ton of money for charities across Canada. We make an impact on youngsters. We get people all the time - You get nice letters saying, 'You did a good job here. My son watched and you're a positive role model,' and that makes you feel good about being yourself. So I would have to say that that's been the key (to a change in his transition). And being happy. I'll tell you it takes a lot of energy to be down and angry... (pauses) a lot of energy. And it's bad negative energy. And when you're down like that, you don't even know you're negative and that, so when you're back up and you're feeling good about yourself and the people around you, it's a huge difference.

- Participant 02

Not playing hockey was probably the biggest thing (most salient change in the transition). I couldn't even watch a game for the first couple of years after I stopped playing because I would sit in the stands and my legs would be shaking, and I'd feel like a player again. So I probably went maybe two or three years without going to a pro game. And I had been asked by a lot of old guys whom I played with to go and play Oldtimers, and one guy - I went to one senior hockey team practice and guys were running into me in practice, and I was like, 'I don't need this shit.' So I didn't touch my gear again for a number of years, and about

> six or seven years after I retired I got a call from one of the (NHL Team) alumni and he said, 'Look, we'd like you to come out and play goal with the alumni. We do a bunch of charity games and stuff and just come out and have fun.' There's another goalie who still does the events with me, and when we scrimmage; he plays at one end most of the time and I'm at the other end… So I started doing that and eventually started playing a little bit more and more, and we've done three-on-three pond hockey, and so I still play a bit.
>
> - Participant 07

Although disengagement was an apparent necessity for both participants, the length thereof may have caused for an element of the transition to be unnecessarily prolonged.

More clearly damaging to the transitions of participants, however, was alcohol and/or substance abuse. Three of the 17 study participants (02, 06, and 10; the same three participants who provided a relatively negative characterization of their respective NHL careers) spoke of some form of such abuse, and in two instances, the consequences that followed. Participant 02, for example, described how he "bottomed out," in part, because of his troubles with alcohol:

> Well, it's (the transition) been up and down. I've always tried to be a positive person. I like to be around positive people, people who are happy. When I went through the divorce, I lost my driver's license from impaired driving - That was a real downer. That was a real kick in the groin because I had a young family, and I had responsibilities still, and I had lost my license, and I had to pick up my kids on the weekend, with somebody who helped me, and take them back and all this. It was very a low time in my life. And I was probably drinking quite heavily. I

> think I probably bottomed out then, and I looked in the mirror a few times and I didn't like what I saw. I wasn't being myself, and I know if you don't like yourself, you can't like other people, so I had to make some adjustments. And I'm trying to work my way out of that. I think I have. But that was probably the down part, where I was losing days, or you're in a funk - Until you really bottom out and something happens where you're not the person you were, or you want to be, then you start your way back out, out of that…

When asked to describe the impetus for these troubles, Participant 02 poignantly responded:

> It would have started in… (pauses) well, my family background - My father's a pretty heavy drinker. It was always around the house and we saw it. I always say my dad was a weekend alcoholic. He would never drink during the week, but from Friday to Sunday night, he liked to have a beer. And he drank socially, pretty heavy though. So we saw this growing up, and every one of us (siblings), participate, some more than others, in having a sociable drink. I would have to say, even currently, I'm a pretty heavy drinker… (pauses) It didn't help - There's no way it helped my hockey career whatsoever, in any way possible, other than the fact there were other guys who liked to go drinking, and carrying on and that as well. But it's just not a good thing. But, I mean, I'm a social drinker. I go socializing, I chat with people, I like to have a beer... (pauses) and that's my lifestyle… (pauses) But it's never helped me in any way. I've spent more money on alcohol than you can know. I should have two places like this (referring to his home), but that's the road I chose. I hurt myself. I possibly hurt my kids with it,

> so it's never in any way been a good thing.... I'm being pretty honest with myself when I say that, that it's never been good. So how does it make me feel now? Actually, I try not to think about it very much. If you're a heavy drinker, nothing ever good can come from it, nothing. So it doesn't make me feel good.

Participant 06 also spoke of an issue related to alcohol, but it was not in the typical sense of over-consumption. As he attempted to explain:

> Well, drinking's never been a problem for me. Like my wife said, 'What are you doing going to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous)? I've never seen you drunk. Maybe once in ten years.' What I've taken a look at was originally I was going to Al-Anon, which is friends and families, and that had to do with our best friend dying, and taking a look at the pain that I had around that. Then going into AA was more a case of taking a look at, 'Was there certain situations that I felt so overwhelmed, or so frustrated, that the only way to actually feel good was to have a drink?' So I've taken a look at it. If I actually have to have a drink in order to feel good, then is that a substance abuse? So even if I haven't had a drink in a week, which I can take it or leave it, but if you get to this moment where you actually need to have a drink in order to feel good - So, I've just decided, shit, what would it look like to work through that, if that moment comes up that you have to have a drink, is to actually work through it where you're not needing that drink. Like I'm not interested in being addicted to anything, or having to have a crutch, so that's how come I'm in AA, is to learn how to work through these addictions...

For Participant 10, alternatively, a rather successful transition, one that began with a rewarding occupation, was diverted by alcohol and substance abuse. As he explained,

these troubles were present to some degree during his career (one he related to a "party" (see page 81)), and ultimately caused him to seek out the assistance of the NHL after retirement:

> (Following a change in residence and employers) I went out there and I had a lot of fun. But that's also when I started partying… I was single still, so I was out catting around every minute I could. I had three houses, none of them mine… Everybody thought I was a millionaire: all these women, houses here, houses there. I was just leading the life of Riley…. I had to get out of there though. I actually went to the NHL program for guys who like to have too much fun, because I was having way too much fun…. It was something that I needed to do. I needed to get a little more centred. At that time of my life, I was kind of living the life of Charlie Sheen, but with no fun tickets to pay for all the fun. I mean, I was running out of them in a hurry. It's a very expensive lifestyle out there. Actually, I remember my friend (NHL Player) said, 'You know, (Participant's Nickname), you got to stop.' So I ended up going to Las Vegas (to take part in, as the participant described, "strippers anonymous, cocaine anonymous, and alcoholics anonymous") of all places and it was a great experience for me. I learned a lot about myself. I learned a lot about why I got traded a lot, and why I was moved around so much, and it was a good experience, and a good way to take a look at myself from a different vantage point for the first time in my life…. But I'm very thankful for the NHL to do that. I was a single dad at the time, so my kids were - They actually brought my kids out and had my kids meet with a few of the doctors, and they really - It's really a class operation, the NHL. It really is.

The aforementioned assistance was the only example of institutional support provided by the sample that did not pertain to the Life After Hockey program.

A form of support more readily sought out and utilized by participants was that which was provided by family (e.g., spouse, parents), friends, and/or close acquaintances. As the participants explained, the social resources available to them were instrumental in achieving a successful transition. Participant 01, for example, credited a great deal of his successful transition to the support of his wife:

> … I just can't emphasize enough, and I'll say it quietly (lowers voice), is the impact that a wife has. Holy smokes. And if I look back on the guys who have had tough transitions, guys who I've played hockey with, man, what happens at home makes a huge difference in all of this. Whether it's the financial expectations or the celebrity expectations, whatever it is, boy, the moment you stop being a player it changes. And if a guy thinks that moving from playing on the (NHL Team) to coaching on the (NHL Team) is the same thing, it isn't. As soon as you step off the ice, it's totally different: the salary's different, celebrity is different, everything. So… (pauses) there just is a reality out there, and if you've got a supportive wife, who can understand that, and a family (exhales), sure is a heck easier than the other way.

Participant 02, who previously spoke of 'bottoming out,' gave similar credit to his (second) wife and family:

> (Continuing from the quotation on page 156) … So once I got through that, then some things come along… met my wife (Participant's Wife's Name) now, who's been a great help and partner. We have goals we set. We reach them…. So we've

> done quite well and we're quite happy where we are now. So that's on a real plus side. I feel good about that.... But I was bitter, or angry, at quite a few things: first it was hockey, then when I went through a divorce, and what that does - Going through a divorce, it doesn't matter who is responsible on one side or the other, there's two young kids involved and that was immensely frustrating - and when you lose control of that... it really sends you for a spin. I mean, the guys you're with, the buddies are laughing, 'Oh yeah, you're single now,' and this and that, but it's not the same... That was never my plan. I come from a very large family - I have eight brothers and sisters and they're very supportive. They were always there. They were there when I played hockey - always invited them to games, everyone in my family. I wanted to share that experience with them, for whatever reason, I don't know, other than we were a close family. And they helped get me through this other part, never questioning what I was doing, but always being supportive - always there for me.

In other instances, family members provided sound direction and/or acted as exemplar role models. Participants 04 and 11 spoke of this positive influence:

> ... Mine (the reason for his successful transition) was a solid family from day one, a good foundation. I think if one has a good foundation, down the road, it's much easier than a bad foundation. Perhaps parents split up, and that happens a lot, but that solid foundation is so important. And it goes on in my life now. That's a big thing to me... (pauses) I'm so proud of the fact that my wife and I have been married 37 years.
>
> - Participant 04

> My oldest brother, the one who went to (American University), was the biggest influence in my life… He's someone who I really looked up to and has had a huge impact in my career.
>
> - Participant 11

The importance of these social resources to a successful transition was that much more pronounced when accounting for the periods of difficulty experienced by Participants 02, 06, and 10. In each of these instances, the participants lacked a comparable level of support, be it as a result of divorce or marital strife. In all, 12 of the 17 study participants benefited from some form of social support.[15] These results are consistent with a vast number of existent and related studies (e.g., Chambers, 2002; Crook & Robertson, 1991; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Swain, 1991; Ungerleider, 1997; Werthner & Orlick, 1986; Wheeler et al., 1996) that show social support as having a positive effect on quality of transition.

Culminating Effects

In relation to the factors and resources aforementioned, quality of transition was generally found to be dependent on no single factor/resource and most positive amongst those participants who: successfully managed the process of identity crisis/exploration (i.e., determined the essence of a post-playing identity); were satisfied with their elite professional career; undertook sufficient pre-retirement planning (e.g., psychological preparation, financial planning, continued education/training, career exploration); and received meaningful social support. As could be expected, the converse (coupled with

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[15] Five of these 12 participants also found networking to be a practice beneficial to attaining an occupation following athletic retirement, and as a result, easing one's transition.

some level of alcohol/substance abuse and/or psychological injury) was true for those who experienced a more difficult transition (findings consistent with Chambers' (2002) previous work regarding NHL alumni). Also affecting the transitions of participants, but not included in the aforementioned assessment, was the institutional support provided by the Life After Hockey program.

The Life After Hockey Program

In assessing the effect(s) of the Life After Hockey program (in relation to the transitions of participants), it was necessary to not only understand the activities, services, and objectives thereof, but also consider for the relative motives, goals, and experiences of former program participants (the primary stakeholder group). A review of these elements allowed for an understanding of both program effect and effectiveness to be achieved. What follows is this review.

Early Iterations of the Program (2002-2006)

As suggested by the works of Blann and Zaichkowsky (1986, 1989) and Baillie and Danish (1992), the interest of the NHL and NHLPA in creating a sustainable career transition program dates back some 20 years. Despite this acknowledged interest, significant progress in this regard was not achieved until the turn of the new millennium (and following the creation of the NHL Alumni Association), at which point there were several attempts at producing just such a program. Included among these attempts were four initiatives, individually led by: Hall of Fame forward Mr. Phil Esposito; former NHL defenseman Mr. Ed Hospodar; the University of Ottawa; and Drake Beam Morin (DBM), an organization specializing in career counseling and transition services. Although little is

known of the first three initiatives, it can be said that the only still in existence is that which was started by DBM.

In 2002, DBM responded to a joint request for proposal (made by the NHL, the NHLPA, and NHL Alumni Association) by launching a pilot program that focused on providing the aforementioned services to NHL players (both current and former). The success of this pilot program, which featured only a small group of participants, directly resulted in the creation of the Life After Hockey program. Ultimately, the earliest iteration of the Life After Hockey program featured not only the services of DBM, but also an educational component (i.e., assistance in degree completion) provided by Quinnipiac University (Hamden, Connecticut). Together, the consortium represented a viable attempt at addressing the long-standing needs of the NHL and NHLPA.

One study participant was among the first of any NHL alumni to take advantage of the career counseling and transition services provided by DBM, and described the support as such:

> Well, I met the (career counseling coaches) - This was at an office downtown.... and there were a lot of people there from different walks of life, there for workshops, and help in looking for jobs, and things like that. So I did all kinds of testing assessments… (pauses) All kinds of workshops: how to look for a job, how to write a résumé, things like that. I also had a mentor who helped me out. So, basically, I would go to my office - It's almost like: get up, shower, put on my suit and tie, go downtown. Go there like I'm going to work. I had my laptop for web browsing; look at different kinds of sites they gave us, and look into different industries. It's like studying: getting to understand the different industries; and

> trying to build a network; and meet people; and not asking for a job, but asking to understand. So I would go in, 'I just retired from professional hockey, and could you help me to understand your industry?' Sometimes they might give - you know, we talked, and then, 'Oh, we might have something. I'll let you know' and 'Would you be interested?' Whether it was IT or whatever, I did a bunch of interviews. That's basically what I was doing.

As the participant intimated, the earliest iteration of the program relied heavily on geographically dispersed and independently contracted career counseling coaches. Short of assisting in job procurement, these coaches provided program participants with essential career transition services.

This iteration of the program did not, however, remain intact for very long, as DBM severed its ties with the NHL following the program's second year of operations (in late 2004). Several reasons were suggested for DBM's departure from the venture, including: mounting frustrations resulting from a disjointed set of outplacement and training models;[16] the organization's inability to exploit their association with the NHL (primarily due to issues of trust/privacy); and a lack of interest, on the part of other professional sport leagues, in the organization's services. Moving forward, the program was entrusted to Quinnipiac University, and one-time DBM Vice President Mr. Joe Jackman (who was subcontracted the responsibilities previously held by DBM).

This second iteration of the program, despite showing progress (e.g., through the development of outplacement and transition models specific for retiring/retired athletes, and sharing of best practices amongst career counseling coaches (which was not

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[16] Originally designed for a more traditional segment of the workforce, the models utilized by DBM did not adequately account for the unique résumés of athletes.

previously done)), was also short-lived. The cause for the end of this iteration stemmed from the program's salary payment structure, one that was dictated not by an annual contract but by the volume of services rendered (i.e., clients served). Unable to secure significant interest and sufficiently increase participation, Mr. Joe Jackman, who was responsible for much of the program's progress, was suggested to have found his earning potential to be undesirably limited. As a result, Mr. Joe Jackman left the program one year after replacing DBM.

Recent Iterations of the Program (2006-2010)

In 2006, and following the departures of both DBM and Mr. Joe Jackman, Quinnipiac University took over the operations of the Life After Hockey program. Since this takeover, the provision of various services has been the primary responsibility of Dr. Dale Jasinski, an Associate Professor of Management at Quinnipiac University and the program's Executive Director, and Mr. Duncan Fletcher, the program's Manager; both of whom work on salary (and not commission, as Mr. Joe Jackman once had). With the support of the NHL, NHLPA, and to a much greater extent, the NHL Alumni Association, the Life After Hockey program has operated under the premise of assisting NHL players, both current and former,[17] in achieving various individualized goals and objectives.

In the past four years, such assistance has come as a result of the provision of communication-, business-, education-, and transition-related services (the four "staples" of the program). In delivering these services, the Life After Hockey program has relied

[17] Individuals eligible to participate in the program must have: played in one regular season or playoff NHL game, and be registered with either the NHLPA or NHL Alumni Association.

upon a system: that involves both coaching and education (an adaptation of the coaching-based delivery system that existed with previous iterations of the program); and within which, transfer of knowledge and skill is accomplished through one-on-one coaching, workshops, webinars, and/or online courses/tutorials. Where the coaching provided by the program has typically been catered to address an individual's transition-related obstacles and/or educational goals, the workshops and online mechanisms have been depersonalized and designed in such a manner as to enhance communication- and/or business-related skills. Consistent with its mode of delivery, the most commonly utilized medium of those aforementioned was the group workshop.

The selection of subject matters for these workshops has historically involved a "bottom-up" process, whereby the program elicits and responds to suggestions from alumni, the NHL Alumni Association directorate, and past program participants. Examples of previous workshop subject matters include: public speaking, sport broadcasting, business development, real estate sales, and financial planning. Of these workshops, only the first three are still provided with any regularity.[18]

In regard to public speaking, the program has offered workshops that have not only allowed for in-depth examination of the practice, but also included opportunities for experiential learning. Typically three or four days in length, and involving the assistance of Dr. Lisa Burns (an Associate Professor of Media Studies at Quinnipiac University), among others (e.g., former NHL player and colour analyst for the Philadelphia Flyers, Mr. Bill Clement), these workshops have supplied participants with lessons in: audience-

[18] The real estate sales workshop was suspended several years ago, after a downturn in the market. The financial planning workshop, alternatively, was sparsely attended, and subsequently discontinued.

and self-analysis; speech construction and organization; presentation aids; anxiety management; and delivery. A further appreciation for these lessons, as well as the structure and substance of a typical public speaking workshop, can be gained by examining the experiences of Participants 09 and 17:

> They (the program) gave you information on how to prepare for the different types of speeches. There can be: informative ones, where you're doing like a public appearance… So they give you all the information, the outline, on putting together a proper speech, to make sure you have all the components, the information that you need. And then they actually make you do it. You got to prepare a speech. You got to get up and you got to do it in front of everyone. They videotape you. They critique you. So, it's much like coaching in that - I don't know if you know, but I think it's around 60% of the human population are visual learners. What that means is that if you tell me to do something, if I'm a visual learner, I don't absorb that; I have to see you do it, and then to totally get it, I have to do it myself. So, it's kind of that premise where they tell you, then they show you, and then you actually have to do it. Then you see the end result, and video analysis (chuckles) doesn't lie very much; you can pretty much see every mistake that you made. But they did it in a way that was very constructive, that didn't back you in a corner, and didn't make you afraid to get back up there and try it again. It was very, very intensive. I mean, they were long days and you had to work your ass off.
>
> - Participant 09

So the three or four days - We went there the first night and it was just kind of a meet and greet. I think there were nine other players there. I might have known one of them, but knew of the majority of them.... And we started into it the next day. So if we had to meet on a Thursday, we were probably there all day Friday, Saturday, and into Sunday - something like that - and we worked right from that morning on, on all different aspects of putting a speech together. I think one of the first things they did was - you paired up with someone, sat with them for five minutes, and then you had to introduce the person in front of the group, and it sounds simple, but oh man did we butcher it (laughs). It was so much harder than it appeared to be. To get to know someone in five minutes and then introduce them, how hard can that be? Oh my god, we were awful at it. And everything was videotaped. And right from that first project - There were a number of them after that, like little things that they had us do, and it was awesome. You could see your improvement.... On either the second or third night, whatever it was, at some point we had dinner, had drinks, and then we went back and watched kind of like our big speech. So we had to sit and watch everyone's - see yourself taped, and oh (as if embarrassed) - and then critique everybody.... When mine came up I got to hear comments from everybody: what you did well, what they'd like to see you do better. By the end of it, by that Sunday, I just really felt good, and confident. It was easy. Where we started to where we finished it seemed like night and day. Now (following the workshop) I knew how to write a speech, put things together, so it worked well. However, they sent - either we took them home or they mailed them later, the CDs/DVDs of our speeches, and it was painful to watch (both the

> participant and researcher chuckle). Here I thought I was a great public speaker, and I'm watching this and it was painful. I was like, 'Oh my god, I friggin suck.' Having said that, we got a thick booklet of everything that was covered that weekend.... Now, I'm not a polished speaker by any means, but it definitely helped me out, and I was better. At some point, if I have to give another speech, I'll pull those things out, and I'll watch myself, and I'll see how bad I look, and then it's easy to correct what I want to do.
>
> - Participant 17

As the two participants indicated, and as gathered by other means, to enhance the public speaking abilities of others, the program has utilized traditional academic methods (e.g., lectures, supplementary materials) in conjunction with experiential practices (e.g., individual, prepared, and impromptu speeches).

The program has also employed such methods in regard to their sport broadcasting workshops, where lessons in hosting, calling games, interviewing, story development, and new (i.e., online) media have been balanced with relative and practical exercises. As a part of these near week-long workshops, participants have received instruction from such individuals as: Mr. Kenneth Venit, a part-time member of Quinnipiac University's Faculty of Journalism, and a former television personality; Mr. William Schweizer, a member of Quinnipiac University's Faculty of Public Relations, and the "Voice of the Quinnipiac Bobcats;" Mr. Richard Hanley, an Assistant Professor of Journalism at Quinnipiac University, and six-time Emmy nominee; the aforementioned Dr. Lisa Burns; Mr. John Shannon, a former executive with *Hockey Night in Canada*, Leafs TV, and the NHL Network, and current on-air personality for Canadian

Television's (CTV) Sportsnet; Mr. John Davidson, the current President of Hockey Operations for the St. Louis Blues, and the 2009 Foster Hewitt Memorial Award winner (awarded for service in sport broadcasting); and Mr. John Buccigross, an anchor for the Entertainment Sports Programming Network (ESPN). Following instruction, participants have typically performed exercises on-set, in a fully operational television/radio studio, and/or on-field, with current athletes. Elaborating on these experiences and the workshop in general were Participants 07, 13, and 14:

> It was good training in the sports broadcasting area: television; radio. They made us do the research that reporters, interviewers, and analysts would do… One of the things that I found, and that was explained to us, out of all the information that you gather, say for an event, or a game, you may only use 10% of what you have written down. So there's a lot of technique in asking and bringing up a topic at the opportune time. We had to analyze different announcers, and colour men, play-by-play guys. Some of the guys I didn't particularly care for, but I have a different - I certainly respect the work that they do, and the amount of knowledge and research that they do. I look at it a lot differently now. Even though I may not like the guy personally, or enjoy watching or listening to him, I have a healthy respect for his knowledge, and his timing, and everything else.
>
> - Participant 07

> In two of the cases, the public speaking and the broadcasting, I felt they were real life situations. I mean, they had their own studio there that's second to none. The New England Sports Network broadcasts out of that studio. It's a professional studio. It's not like you're walking in and you're sitting there behind one guy with

> this one little camera... No, you have the complete panel. You've got everybody there. You've got people doing boards underneath you so when you're seeing the monitor, you're seeing the boards that are coming up - the stats, they call them the boards - you're seeing the boards come up in front of you. You can talk, and you can hear when they're coming back to you so you know when to look back at the camera. You don't need to keep everything here (in his notes) because you can read it right off the monitor. But the thing is you don't want to be sitting there looking at the monitor when they come back; this is where I'm saying you got to be able to pick up what's going on. And they say, 'Back to you in one, in two, one, left camera,' and you know how to go look.... So, I mean, those are real life situations. That's how it really works.
>
> - Participant 13

> We learned about doing a story, writing your own sportscast. Like we had to do our own sportscast, like a radio sportscast, and we recorded it. We went to a baseball game and interviewed a player. Did some play-by-play and some colour commentating of a baseball game. We did being an anchor...You did your own sportscast thing, and you read the monitor, and had the highlights and stuff. Then you sat down and did the TV thing where I interviewed you like you're interviewing me, with the camera and all that stuff. So, all different aspects of it. It covered a lot of ground.
>
> - Participant 14

As with the public speaking workshops, and in an effort to encourage both continued self-evaluation and self-promotion, participants completing the various exercises prescribed

by the program are supplied a video of their work. In this way, the program has attempted to positively affect the experiences of participants post facto.

Differing slightly in presentation, and more abstract in nature, the program's workshops on business development have been delivered with the intent of providing participants with an increased understanding of: entrepreneurship, markets, financing, pricing, profitability, and feasibility plans. Typically four days in length, and involving multiple lecturers (e.g., Dr. Dale Jasinski; Mr. Duncan Fletcher; and Dr. Steven Dunn, an Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin (Oshkosh)), these workshops have exposed participants to both theoretical concepts and "active participation exercises" (e.g., relating to hockey training facilities). Among those who discussed these two aspects of the program were Participants 12 and 16, who noted:

> The small business workshop, again, it was basically the very basics of business, something that you would take in the first year of university. It's just letting you know about: first of all, start up costs; business plans; how am I going to do this; be prepared before you jump in with two feet and open up a business that's going to cost you a $1,000,000. Just because someone wants to sell you something, and it looks great, and you're interested in it, doesn't mean it's going to be successful, in any business. You've got to make sure that: the bottom line is going to be met; everything that you're calculating on your business plan is going to meet. You don't want to be given any big surprises by the time that you're done doing your business; you don't want to be going bankrupt in your first year. That was what the business [workshop was about]. And they were opening us up to, again, more marketing ideas, and more advertising strategies, through media, through the

website. Learning all these things that I really - You know, I was new to this stuff. I didn't know this. I hadn't gone to university to learn things. I didn't take business in school. So this was kind of a crash course and opened your eyes to: expenses that you didn't think you were going to incur on a business that you're going to open up; making sure that you add all these things in before you make a decision to go forward and open up any sort of business.

- Participant 12

They go through business models. They go through the businesses out there. It's almost like a college course where, 'Okay, let's take a coffee shop. We'll dissect it. Why didn't this work? Why did that work? Location, whatever it is.' Like I said, Life After Hockey, so far, to me, has been a stimulus for thought process, and getting the juices flowing. And that's basically what it did, it got juices flowing. I can't remember the guy's name…. Anyway, he had this thing he wanted to expand, and raise money, and dadada, and I think that took off... And we took that, and they showed how to expand it. We also looked into the hockey training program that - How to be a former NHL player and have hockey-specific training apparatuses and things like that - we dissected that. Just trying to stimulate the thought process of, as a former player, the avenues that you might be able to travel… or if you had something specific you wanted to do, 'Let's do that as a case.' It was very interesting. Like I said, it got the juices flowing. There was also a measure of comfort that came out of it, that there is someplace I can turn to get this help that I might need if I was ever going to go down that road. Informative. But it also is reality, 'Hey, you want to be a coffee shop owner? You

> can go to Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, Tim Hortons. C'mon. (mimics slapping someone in the face) Have a wake-up call here, son. What's your niche?' So it was that too. It wasn't just, 'Hey, these are great,' but, 'Hey, wait a minute now.' It made you really want to think about it before you did it. As much as it was to launch you on a journey, it was also there to prevent you from a train wreck.
>
> - Participant 16

Ultimately, and as the two program representatives indicated, participation in these workshops should result in an increased ability to properly evaluate the prospects of a given business.

It is worthwhile noting too that each of the five aforementioned workshops has changed location over time. Among the locations in which these workshops have taken place are: Boston, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; Hamden, Connecticut (Quinnipiac University); Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Phoenix, Arizona; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Toronto, Ontario. These changes in location do not however represent the program's greatest initiative in easing participant accessibility; that has come as a result of the program's utilization of Blackboard, a virtual learning environment/course management system.

This system, which allows instructors (i.e., the Life After Hockey program) to host content online, has been used to deliver virtual substitutes of the workshops aforementioned. The online versions of the program's workshops, alternatively termed webinars, have typically been several weeks in length, and have asked participants to complete a variety of topic-specific readings and tasks (just as in the physical

workshops). Moving forward, the program envisions these webinars as being a type of prerequisite to workshop participation.

An alternative form of online assistance offered by the program is made available through Element K, a provider of e-learning courses/tutorials. Ranging in breadth and depth, these self-directed courses/tutorials may focus on such topics as: marketing, negotiations, and PowerPoint presentations.[19] Participants who have chosen to take part in such courses/tutorials have done so at their own discretion, and have generally not been subjected to any temporal constraints.

The final two forms of assistance provided by the program are highly individualistic in nature, and pertain to one's unique educational and/or transition-related aspirations. When asked to provide either of these types of assistance, the program has typically reviewed the interests and qualifications (e.g., through university records, résumés, and/or aptitude tests) of the individual, and then advised him of available and applicable channels.[20] In some instances, and in accordance with the program's position as an "honest broker," the aspirations of the individual may have been modified, so as not to encourage a seemingly futile endeavour. Examples of individuals who have utilized these services (in relation to more recent iterations of the program) were not, however, made readily known, and thus, not available for study.

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[19] The entire catalogue of Element K features several hundred courses.

[20] The program has not, however, been directly responsible for the education of any individual participant (as alumni seeking assistance in regard to degree completion are redirected to traditional institutes of higher learning).

Program Participation

Collectively, and accounting for each iteration of the program, the 17 study participants utilized four different types of program services. Included among these services were: communication-based workshops pertaining to public speaking, and sport broadcasting; business-based workshops regarding venture development; and career/transition-based counseling. A quantitative summary of the 17 participants' use of these program services is provided in Table 4.

The means by which study participants initially became aware of these services varied, but most typically involved (the number of participants (N = 17) who referenced said mean is in parentheses): e-mails from program staff (n = 11); word-of-mouth promotion (from other alumni; n = 7); and/or in-person presentations (again, from program staff; n = 3). The responses provided by participants, in this regard, were found to be consistent with the program's alumni-related marketing efforts, which, in addition to the means aforementioned, previously included newsletters, and still includes a static link on the NHL Alumni Association's website. It is also worth noting that, in addition to these efforts, the program has marketed its services to active NHL players through: the NHLPA's six Divisional Representatives; presentations at annual players' association meetings; and a static link on the NHLPA's internal website, "The Source."

The participants' reasons for utilizing the program's services were ultimately tied to (the number of participants (N = 17) who provided said reason is in parentheses): a desire for skill acquisition/enhancement (related to a pre-existing occupation/venture or specific function; n = 9); a need for direction/guidance (related to one's transition and/or new occupation/venture; n = 6); an interest in a specific subject matter (n = 5); feelings of

indebtedness (n = 1); and the suggestions of a peer (n = 1).[21] For Participant 05, for example, attendance in a public speaking workshop was related to both a desire for skill enhancement and an interest in the subject matter:

> I get asked to speak at a lot of different functions.... I think I'm a half-decent public speaker, but I was always intrigued by public speakers, and the message they send, and how they carry themselves, and bridging between sentences, and listening to guys on radio, how they talk - You know, a lot of guys will say, 'well,' or 'you know,' constantly. I just wanted to take it to another level, and that's why I got involved with the Life After Hockey program.

Participant 08, alternatively, described the program as representing a source for direction in a time of immense disorientation:

> Basically, it's (athletic retirement) like a kid finishing high school, wanting to go into the workforce without knowing anything, or what he wants to do, and if you can picture that, that's how a hockey player is. It's like leaving a world and being born again.... I needed some direction.... In the letter, they (the Life After Hockey program) explained what the program was all about, and I said, 'That's exactly what I need to bring me back to the real world,' because I had just left the protected world [of hockey].

For both participants, the availability of these services resulted in a great deal of regard for the program.

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[21] Two participants also acknowledged that the positive experience of a first workshop led to participation in a second.

Assessments of the Program

Such regard pervaded the comments of each of the 17 study participants; so much so that the ratio of positive to negative comments (concerning the program) was nearly 11:1 (and more specifically, 72:7). The foci of these evaluative comments generally centred on: the program's instructional methods; the camaraderie generated amongst workshop participants; the cost/value of program use; and the program's workshop-related amenities. Of these attributes, chief was that which pertained to instruction.

In all, 16 of the 17 study participants supplied at least one positive comment in regard to the program's instructional methods. Participant 01, as a former teacher, provided perhaps the most apt of these:

> I loved the way they set it up: the correspondence, the way Duncan (Fletcher) communicated with us, and set out guidelines and expectations. I thought it was great. Then, when I attended the one in (City), with Lisa (Burns) and the people who were there, they were good at what they did. They were good teachers… I was just impressed by the whole thing…. The key from my standpoint is that it was participatory. There was instruction and then the opportunity to do it yourself. There was the critiquing of what you did. There was the videotaping of what you did. The teachers doing the critiquing were really good at it.

Consistent with the comments of Participant 01, study participants regularly lauded the program for its (the number of participants (N = 17) who provided said sentiment is in parentheses): quality of instruction/instructors (n = 11), delivery of meaningful appraisal (n = 9), and use of experiential learning activities (n = 8).

The program's instructional methods were also praised, albeit to a much lesser extent, for their: use of prototypes, and intensive nature. Participant 14, for example, was one of three study participants to comment on the quality of the program's prototypes (i.e., guest speakers):

> (Prototype) came in and talked about being a colour analyst, and doing homework, and that preparation is the most important thing. Just like when you're a player, you've got to prepare for games by: eating properly, resting properly, knowing your opponent, and being in shape. As a broadcaster: you need to know what you're going to be talking about, you need to be knowledgeable, you can't assume things, you need to know things, you have to have facts, and preparation is everything. I mean, (Prototype) is unreal. He showed us books where he called the (NHL Team) versus whatever game, and he had the other team's thing (notes) here, and all the little things, all the tidbits, and whatever. You can never have enough information about a guy because you never know if a pane of glass gets broken and all of a sudden you start panning around and you've got to fill time, 'Well, there's this guy,' blah blah blah blah. It's all about stories, and being prepared. That's where he really sort of drove that in my head. That was the biggest thing I got from him, is to talk to people, find out things about what's going on - any little thing - because it's all good stories people want to know.

Participants 13 and 15, alternatively, spoke of the benefits resulting from the rigorous nature of the program's workshops:

> The broadcasting course is the one I started with, and I liked being trained and being taught so much that I just jumped on board with it and enjoyed - You know,

> it was tough. It challenged me when I went through it, but it challenged me in a good way. It challenged me to make me better, and I thought that the people there did an excellent job at it because they could answer my questions…
>
> - Participant 13

> We had that little team there and every night we went for dinner. Every morning we were eating at the hotel, having breakfast together, right in the class room at 8:30, lunch right there, in that real learning atmosphere, where you have your computers and televisions. And they're taping everything, and they're going over it with you, and you're going in a booth - You know, they're cramming this stuff into us. At the end of the day, 5:30 or whatever, going out for dinner with everybody, back to the hotel by 9:30 or whatever, crash, and then up in the morning and doing it again. Like every day was just pounding. We were together all the time and there was a lot of stuff - Even when we were out for dinner, we were all around a big table talking about it. They really jammed this into us. Some guys took it and ran with it and they're doing a pretty good job. I know I could have done it (sport broadcasting). I know I'd be good at it.
>
> - Participant 15

As Participant 15 also alluded to, these workshops were conducive to generating feelings of camaraderie.

Provided with ample opportunity to converse with fellow workshop attendees (be it through in-class exercises or group outings), participants (n = 8) routinely recalled experiencing such feelings. For Participant 07, for example, these feelings of camaraderie were tied to reminiscing:

> It was definitely a great experience. And it was funny, because I met a couple of people I hadn't seen for years, whom I played against, who were in the program at the time, and it was kind of neat. It was a bit of a reunion of sorts, because a lot of guys whom you play against, and don't really know, you never talk to them outside the rink, and to sit around and chat about - You know, the stories get bigger and better every time you tell them, as you get older (laughs). The lies get bigger, and the great plays get better.

For others, camaraderie was equated with positive reassurance and/or a new found sense of support:

> (Prototype) was there as well. The guys who were there related well with him because: he's an ex-hockey player, we see him on TV, and he's done extremely well. I never realized - He told us some personal stories, and we didn't realize what he went through, and you just go, 'Wow. Okay.' Like I don't know what it is, but you know the old saying 'misery loves company'? (chuckles mildly) But when you hear these stories you go, 'Geez, I'm not alone,' or 'I struggled, and I'm not the only one that's struggled, and I won't be the last one.' But when you hear a good story, 'Okay, yeah. He came out of it and look at him; he does a great job...' It was good to have him there as well.
>
> - Participant 02

> It opened my eyes that there a lot of guys in that situation, and I think in talking with a lot of those guys, it opened my eyes to what I needed to do to maybe transition a little more naturally. I think it was reassuring, in a sense, to hear that there were other guys who were struggling with different things as well; that you

> weren't alone. In the end, that might be the most important thing, just to know that there are other guys who did what you did, in your trade, who are kind of in the same boat now, and that we can help each other. I think that's another part that I haven't mentioned, is I feel comfortable now in tracking anybody down - who played, used to play - and that there's that connection that people want to help you. And I think hockey players are raised to be tough, and to grind it out, and do it on our own, and you don't think that - I mean, it's a natural human instinct, especially for us guys, to help each other, but I think some guys don't realize that, and don't ask - I don't mean handouts, but just if I say, 'Hey do you know so and so?,' or 'Have you done this before?,' or 'What are you doing now,' just to generate conversation. I think, going back, that maybe in the last few years of my career, if I would have had a better understanding of that - I don't know if I would be in a different position now, but maybe I would have networked a little more, and explored that avenue of our social network of hockey players.
>
> - Participant 11

In addition to such feelings of camaraderie, and in coming to a positive assessment of the program, participants also referenced the low cost (and consequently, high value) of workshop attendance/service use.

Bearing much of the cost associated with program participation has been the Life After Hockey Committee, a group composed of representatives from the NHL, NHLPA, and NHL Alumni Association. With the assistance of the committee, participants have: needed only to pay for travel costs (when attending a workshop and/or venturing to the program's base of operations), and not been subject to any of the time/service restrictions

that were prevalent with previous iterations of the program (in which participants were required to pay for overtime). Participants 10 and 15 were among those (six) to compliment the program for its low cost/high value, and explained how this was a significant point of attraction in the attendance of multiple workshops:

> I said (to other NHL alumni), 'It's free!' I mean, I've got to be honest with you, I went to some of those because: five great meals, meet some guys - Why not? Get on a plane, fly to (City), stay at the (Luxury Hotel), go to (Restaurant) one night, league pays for everything. That's why I kept saying, 'It's great!' Who wouldn't want to do it?
>
> - Participant 10

> Here it is - Show up to Quinnipiac (University), everything's paid for. Everything. You got out for food, you go out for dinner, wine, filet mignon, all paid for; cost us nothing. I mean, for seven days, how much is that worth? $2-3000? I don't know. I would say that, with what we're getting. I don't know why anybody wouldn't want to take it. I know it's helped me. I'm happy I took it.
>
> - Participant 15

As both participants also explained, coupled with this attraction was the program's provision of various amenities.

Included among these amenities were: food and beverage, comfortable lodging, environments conducive to learning, and modern educational technologies. For Participants 15 and 17, and of the amenities aforementioned, drawing particular acclaim were the locations of the program's workshops:

> I loved that atmosphere down there, at Quinnipiac. If you don't learn there then [where?].... That's what I enjoyed the most about it, being on that campus.... When you're on that campus, wow.
>
> - Participant 15

> It was very comfortable to go there. Like I said, it was a nice facility. The rooms were nice. Everything was top notch.
>
> - Participant 17

For Participant 03, of greatest importance was the program's use of modern educational technologies:

> ...There they've got the television studio where you're actually able to sit at a sports desk, and have a camera, and have the producer talk to your ear, and set up a clip, and talk about it. There's no possibility for me to do that anywhere else.

In all, five study participants provided at least one positive comment in regard to the program's workshop-related amenities.

Amidst the overwhelming praise for the program was, however, a smattering of detractions; the most common of which (cited by three study participants) pertained to perceived deficiencies in networking capacity. The first to comment on these deficiencies was Participant 08, who described the program as lacking a sufficient business network:

> One thing I found disappointing was that (the program) didn't have any business connections. I did everything on my own, which is okay, learned to do it, but there were no business connections. The guy from Life After Hockey said, 'That's one of the things we're still [working on]'... But when I got in there, what I understood was they would look for me, and have all kinds of places I could try,

> that knew the program, but it wasn't so…That's what I was expecting, but I ended up doing it on my own.

Participant 10 added that the program's purposeful disassociation from the practice (of networking) did a disservice to participants:

> They ought to do a little more networking. They do the preparation, but then there's no connection. Like, 'Okay, I'm ready to do public speaking, but what do I do? Who do I do it with?' I think it would be helpful if the NHL brokered some things for the participants, if they got you the interview or something like that, because they're a powerful entity, and I think - They don't do it by design. They say it up front, 'We're not going to do the networking for you,' but I think that would be a powerful component to the program because they do have such clout.

Complicating the issue further were oversights in the content of the program's existent workshops.

As Participants 06 and 13 (among others) explained, these oversights primarily centred on a lack of marketing-specific training:

> It's like once a year, wow, you get this good hit (of education), and then where do you go with it? Because it's kind of been, 'Here, we give you this coaching, and now go do it on your own.'
>
> - Participant 06

> (On the topic of the program's public speaking workshops) There are guys who are in markets such as ours, which are not big markets, so you're going to do a lot of free stuff (public speaking), and you're never going to make any money at it. And you understand you're going to do that in a way that you're going to build

> your confidence, you're going to build on your abilities, but where do you go from there? How are you going to turn that into something more than charity work? .... (On the topic of the program's sport broadcasting workshops) There are a lot of things in the course that just scratch the surface. I was after them for a long time on media communications. Well you're saying, 'Go on Twitter.' Well, 'How do I go on Twitter? What do I do on Twitter?' You say, 'Go on Facebook.' 'I don't know anything about Facebook.' You say, 'Start blogging.' 'Well, how do I do that?'.... 'You guys (the program) keep talking about doing this and doing that. You assume we all know how to use computers. You assume we all know how to do that and do this, but we don't.' It's a new age. Maybe some of the players who are playing today now do, but I'm (Number)-years old, and I consider myself pretty computer literate, and Duncan had to walk me through, step-by-step, over the phone, to start (Name of Participant's Blog). And the three or four times that I've blogged on it, I only had one or two people respond to it, so it was never a huge success for me. So how do I make that a success for me? 'Okay, you showed me how to start it, now how do I build it? How do I make it successful? How do I make it where I'm getting 10,000 hits a month and I can take this into a prospective employer, a TV station, and say, 'Look, I've got a following.' This is what you told me to do, 'Build a following and then you can take that in.' I say, 'How do I build that following?''
>
> - Participant 13

Although both participants were quick to note the availability of additional program assistance, neither seemed entirely satisfied with the core content of the workshops. In an

effort to address each of the concerns aforementioned, the program has recently attempted to develop and utilize a larger network (e.g., in designing an advanced venture development workshop where business plans may be presented to bankers and lawyers).

Despite these and other detractions (namely, the infrequency of (regional) workshops, and the program's failure to recognize the promotional efforts of past participants), a positive depiction of the program was readily derived. Accordingly, participants expressed feelings of gratitude and appreciation for the program, and often found the available assistance to be of significant benefit. In addition, and as many participants explained, program participation routinely had a clear and positive effect on quality of life (albeit, in some instances (due to temporal constraints), several years after athletic retirement) and/or retirement adjustment.

Effects of Program Participation

Perhaps the greatest examples of the program's positive effect on participants' quality of life came in those instances where assistance resulted in "a new direction" (i.e., a new occupational opportunity). Among the seven study participants to note the program's role in this regard were Participants 08 and 14:

> (The program) helped me, helped me to see things more clearly. It gave me a path to follow. It was like opening the window of the world.... I didn't know anything. I took business management in case I started a business. I took computer [courses] because IT was coming around - And a sales certificate - you can sell anything, and maybe if you work hard you can have a better chance of making the type of money you used to make. And the program, it helped me setting up the path.
>
> - Participant 08

> (The program) gave me a new direction. It's a great program, I think. You know, for a lot of guys who are uneducated - like, I don't even have my Grade 12. When I went and played in (Town) in junior, I was going into Grade 12, and we went to school like three times a week, or twice a week after school, and you had to do all your work at home - You only had to do about a quarter of the work and you were given your grades, but I wasn't a big homework guy to start with, and now I've got to do it all at home, it was like, 'You know what? Whatever,' so I just blew it off. I mean, at 32, when I retired, I went to night school and took a couple of classes to get my GED (General Educational Development; high school diploma)... (pauses) Sometimes you just need someone to show you the way, and I think that's the thing that's good about this Life After Hockey program, is they're going to give you some tools to help you decide what you might be good at doing and help you get involved in it. And most players are pretty outgoing guys, and whether you want to get into sales, or a trade, or anything and everything, they're there to try and help you be successful at landing a job to help you continue with your life, because you've got lots of life to live after you're done playing hockey, and if you're lost it's a tough grind. So, I think it's a great thing that they're doing, to help provide people the opportunity to try and establish a new career to keep you going along for a long time, because you've got a lot of life ahead.
>
> - Participant 14

Interestingly, examples of this positive effect could be drawn in relation to each of the four different types of program services utilized by study participants.

In several other instances, participants found that the assistance of the program subsequently and positively affected a pre-existing occupation/venture. Ten of the 17 study participants spoke of this effect, with Participants 09 and 16 providing the most apt examples thereof:

> (The public speaking workshop) really helped me, and made everything that I was doing in my business life so much easier, because if you understand the process of how to do something, and you've actually done it, then you're eliminating a lot of the mistakes that you might have in trying to get to a finished product. So when I started shooting all this video, for (work), I would shoot it and it would be done; very few times did I have to go and re-shoot because of some mistake that I made, and it's all because of what I learned there.
>
> - Participant 09

> Life After Hockey, the program, did me a huge service when I did the sport broadcasting [workshop]. It put me in front of the camera, gave me some ways to research - Obviously it was geared to broadcasting a sports game, but ultimately what I turned it into was a little bit of a spotlight where I did for this company - We sold goods on TV, and I started taking some of our products on (Television Network), and it was the comfort level that I got from the program, and some of the knowledge that they gave me, that gave me the confidence to do it.
>
> - Participant 16

As was the case with Participant 16, program participation was also found to result in increased levels of self-confidence.

Such an increase typically stemmed from the acquisition of new skills and abilities, and was a point of discussion for nine of the 17 study participants. Participants 01 and 13, for example, remarked:

> I feel much more confident. I mean, I've always felt confident in public speaking, but I learned some things that I didn't know about myself and so, yeah, it (the assistance) was very valuable.
>
> - Participant 01

> I think it's made me a more confident person; I really do. I think I approach things that may have made me a little nervous with a little more confidence now. I mean, if you can get up in front of 3- or 5,000 people and talk - If someone can just put a microphone in front of your face and you can talk then there's a lot of other things in life that are a lot easier to do than that. If you can get on camera and have someone talking in your ear, you can do other things. I think the confidence that I've gained by going through the programs has helped me in other aspects, because it helps your confidence level with things that maybe don't seem as difficult to do as those are. So, if you're confident with the difficult stuff, how much easier is the easy stuff, and I think that's really brought a lot to me as far as my capabilities, and how I deal going forward.
>
> - Participant 13

Each of the 17 study participants referenced some form of personal skill-enhancement resulting from program participation, and although such skills could not always be exploited (due, for example, to a pre-existing and conflicting occupation/venture), they did readily contribute to an added level of relative self-confidence.

The final and most poignant effect resulting from program participation came in the participants' adoption of the Life After Hockey program as a trusted and valuable "support system." As Participants 06, 10, and 12 explained, with the presence of the program, the process of athletic career transition need not ever again be a solitary pursuit:

> It's had a good effect because you feel like you're actually a part of a team, that you've got some support.... And they just treated us with the utmost respect. My gosh, I mean Duncan, and Dale, and Lisa, they've just been absolutely tremendous.
>
> - Participant 06

> (The program) has made me feel like I'm part of a family. If I really needed something, they'd probably try to help me to get it, in some way. So, that was kind of a neat feeling. You know, I thought I was floating around on my own island, and I realized that there's a lot of other players with the same kind of feelings, and anxieties, and the league is really willing to help you try to rectify the situation and get to a better place. I think it's great, and that's why I'm a big promoter of the league. Even though I have my own hard feelings about some of the things that happened to me, I still think it's a great league for the players.
>
> - Participant 10

> There's a support system now. If I ever have questions, I can call some very smart people who can help me out. Again, it's having a support network around you - If you don't have the answers, you don't just have to come up with it on your own; you have people you can look on. I think that's the biggest thing, is being able to pick up the phone and talk to somebody who is a professional in that field and can

> help you out. Maybe it's the easiest question, but for whatever reason you're having a brain cramp and you can't figure out, you make one quick phone call and like, 'Oh yeah! That's so simple.' Ultimately, the most important thing, I think, is being able to have that support system.
>
> - Participant 12

In all, seven of the 17 study participants described the program as being a continued source of support.

The Effectiveness of the Life After Hockey Program

The aforementioned comments were of considerable importance given the study's adoption of the stakeholder approach to examining organizational effectiveness. To reiterate, the stakeholder approach assesses effectiveness in terms of an organization's ability to meet and satisfy the needs and priorities of key constituencies (Connolly et al., 1980). Of particular relevance to the present case of effectiveness was the extent to which the Life After Hockey program satisfied the needs and priorities of that constituency which was solely comprised of NHL alumni (as this constituency was the focus of the program's primary goal).

Representing a small but engaged portion of this constituency were the 17 participants of this study. As the sample indicated, the Life After Hockey program was largely successful not only its delivery of various services, but also in its efforts to positively affect the athletic career transitions of alumni. Undermining this overwhelmingly positively review was, however, a selection of shortcomings. Given these and the accounts aforementioned, the program was ultimately found to be appreciably effective but somewhat underdeveloped.

Chapter Five - Program Implications

To better serve the interests of NHL players, both current and former, the Life After Hockey program may wish to consider and/or implement any number of new initiatives. It is suggested that such initiatives centre on: addressing the networking-related concerns of past program participants; modifying the existent curriculum; further engaging current/former NHL players; and providing new services. Although not every one of these initiatives may be immediately feasible (due, for example, to budgetary constraints), each are believed to warrant consideration and further investigation.

The first of these proposed initiatives concerns networking capacity, and would require the program to make a more concerted effort toward generating and involving new business connections. In doing so, the program could not only enhance its existent workshops by offering more applied versions thereof (an aforementioned operational goal of the program), but perhaps also work toward providing opportunities for internships (a point of discussion for four of the 17 study participants). Formalizing these sorts of relationships would presumably ease the processes by which participants explored their interests and/or applied a newly learned ability.

The integration of a business network would also lend itself well to a program-adopted university-style curriculum, one that features varying levels of topic-specific workshops. Originally proposed by program representatives, such a curriculum found support from at least two of the 17 study participants:

> I think that some of the courses I'd like to see continued: a level one, two, and three. I think that's what I would like to see, and the eligibility for a refresher.
>
> - Participant 13

> The problem with the program I see is it gets the juices flowing, but it doesn't take you to the next [level]. You know, a week long sports broadcasting course doesn't take you to the next level. It's almost like you'd like to have, 'Okay, I did 101. When does the 201 course come?'
>
> - Participant 16

This form of curriculum would allow for: novice participants to explore a particular area of interest; more learned/engaged individuals to undertake continued education; and the most qualified of candidates to interact with members of a particular business community, and/or participate in a new set of experiential learning activities.

In addition to the initiatives aforementioned, there exist several opportunities in relation to the marketing of the program. The first and perhaps most notable of such opportunities arises from the program's admitted inability to reach various segments of NHL alumni. Two such segments include: alumni playing professionally in Europe (where communication barriers undermine contact); and alumni playing professionally in a North American minor league (where player movement is regular and difficult to track). Although these segments of alumni have been found to be difficult to reach, they, as Participant 03 explained, would likely provide excellent candidates for program participation:

> The coolest thing about the Alumni [Association] is that even if you just played one game, you're part of the program. I think if more players knew that - because a lot of guys who played maybe 30 - I don't want to speak for them, but I know for myself, you don't really feel like an NHL player when you've played (fewer than 100) games.... I think the thing about the Alumni [Association] that is pretty

> cool is that they understand that the guys who played fewer games probably need them more than the guys who played more (presumably due to a lower earning potential).... I think another way [to provide assistance] is to get in touch with import hockey players in Europe, because most of those guys have played a little bit in the NHL and have gone to Europe to prolong their career. If they knew that there was a program that would offer them a real estate course, a broadcasting course, any type of course, they probably would start planning their lives a little bit more near the tail end of their careers over in Europe. I mean, there are a ton of players over there who have no idea that they could be registered and could be a part of the alumni program.

The program would thus be well advised to expend more effort in reaching out to these segments of alumni, and not relent when faced with some form of related obstruction (e.g., a language barrier).

Similarly warranting further attention are active NHL players. In reaching out to this segment, the program may be able to provide any number of proactive and preventative solutions toward transition-related issues. To better reach and subsequently and positively affect this segment, the program will likely have to: enhance its relations with the NHLPA; conduct annual in-person, team-by-team presentations; modify the style of existent presentations; and provide supplementary reading/promotional material. Capturing the format and intent of the aforementioned annual team-by-team presentations was Participant 09, who cleverly described such a process as a "deliberate soft sell":

> I think it's just a deliberate soft sell of looking beyond your career, in that it has to be constant, and that you can't back them (active players) into a corner, saying,

> 'You got to be doing this.' Rather, 'Here's something that you might want to think about, and these are the reasons why. And it might not be right now that interests you, but in the next couple of years you really should start getting involved, learning more about these things,' and just kind of laying the foundation, over a period of time. Hopefully they'll finally say, 'Alright, I'm sick of hearing about this; I want to see what it's all about.'

The effect and effectiveness of such presentations, when compared to previous renditions thereof (e.g., those conducted at annual players' association meetings), would also benefit from: the participation of a (relatable) NHL alumnus; and the inclusion of a discussion pertaining to pre-retirement planning and identity/career exploration.[22] As a complement to these presentations (and a suggestion originally of Dr. Dale Jasinski's), the program may also supply a handbook featuring: descriptions of transitions, best practices, and program services; as well as testimonials from past program participants.

Other, less intensive marketing initiatives would see the program utilize traditional and/or social media. With regard to traditional media advertising, the program may, for example, have a static banner/link on the NHL's official website (www.nhl.com), and/or run commercials on telecasts of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) *Hockey Night in Canada.* Social media, alternatively, provide opportunity in the form of networking websites such as *K-nected,* "a private online community exclusively for current and former professional athletes" (K-nected, n.d.).

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[22] Of the various transition-related suggestions provided by study participants for active NHL players, the two most common pertained to: undertaking pre-retirement planning (cited by 13 of the 17 study participants); and exploring one's own identity and/or professional interests (cited by seven of the 17 study participants). These suggestions are also consistent with Baillie's (1993) recommendations for pre-retirement, program-delivered interventions (see page 40).

Collaborating with such a website would not only ease social connectivity amongst past program participants, but also provide another mean by which the program could market its services.

Given the scope of the marketing initiatives aforementioned, the program may also be required to hire an additional member of staff (even if only on a part-time basis). The ideal candidate for such a position would likely be an NHL alumnus who has: an intimate knowledge of the program; some level of work experience or post-secondary education in marketing; and a familiarity with and connections within European professional hockey. This individual, taking on responsibilities similar to those of a marketing manager, would ultimately work to ensure that all NHL players, both current and former, are made aware of the program.

Finally, and in a further effort to enhance program utility, it is recommended that several new services be provided. Included among these are: workshops pertaining to familial transition, financial planning, and media communication; on-demand, quota-based regional workshops; as well as new forms of participant sponsorship. Ultimately designed to improve players' quality of life, the proposed initiatives are: consistent with the program's existent modes of operation; and as a collective, highly inclusive.

As an example of this inclusivity, the target audience for the first of three proposed workshops, one pertaining to familial transition, is not any individual segment of alumni, but is instead the families of active players. Largely overlooked by the program, these families represent a stakeholder group who has the potential to both affect and be affected by athletic career transitions. As Participant 01 explained:

> If you're dealing with a player and you're talking life after hockey, you're not dealing with [just] the player; you're dealing with the family, the wife, the children, and I would suggest the in-laws and the parents. All of the expectations that are in there, that have been affected by the person's time as a professional athlete, and all of a sudden that's going to change, and it's not just the player that it impacts on… There has to be a way of the wife, and the children, and the parents being counseled as to how to support that player.

Heeding these words, it is suggested that the program make available (to spouses, members of family, and/or significant others) a workshop that generally examines a variety of transition-related topics (e.g., change in lifestyle and family dynamic, value of social support, and post-retirement pursuits). To further exploit the potential of such an initiative, the program may also wish to reach out to any number of existent and relevant associations (e.g., the Pittsburgh Penguins Wives Association, the St. Louis Blues Better Halves, and the Professional Sports Wives Association (PSWA)), and subsequently offer to provide regional workshops on-demand. As social support was found to be amongst the most influential and positive factors affecting athletic career transition, it is believed that this initiative will be of great benefit to both players and their families.

A similar measure of benefit may also be realized through the provision of a workshop in financial planning (Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). Well regarded amongst study participants, and found to have a positive effect on athletic career transition, financial planning was suggested ($n = 2$) to be a subject matter worthy of inclusion to the program's existent catalogue of workshops. Specifically designed for active players, such a workshop could examine: basic concepts in financial planning (e.g., net worth,

budgeting); financial products (e.g., stocks, real estate, personal accounts); taxation; and investment planning.

Also designed for active players is the proposed workshop in media communication. As a part of such a workshop, participants could: practice various forms of interviews (e.g., intermission, soft, hard, remote); receive relevant feedback; and learn the operations of print, broadcast, and online/social media. Integrating this offering with its existent counterpoint, the program's sport broadcasting workshop, would also: allow for active players to interact with alumni, and enhance the learning experiences of all attendees. Although this workshop is not expected to provide the same measure of benefit as those previously proposed, it does represent an excellent opportunity for the program to introduce its other services to active players.

In addition to the proposed offerings, the program may also make available on-demand, quota-based regional workshops. As a part of this service, prospective participants would be required to: select a workshop subject matter of interest (e.g., public speaking, real estate sales); assemble a group of such size as to meet a program-mandated quota (e.g., 6-12 participants); and work with program representatives to identify a time and location convenient for the delivery of the specified workshop. The provision of such a service would ultimately represent a sort of compromise between those individuals desiring a more frequent delivery of regional workshops/unable to find sufficient time to attend workshops (n = 5) and a program constrained by limited resources.

The final service-related recommendation for the program would see participant sponsorship expand (beyond workshop participants and Element K users) to include

players (current or former) who wish to: attend a Dale Carnegie course, workshop, and/or seminar; or gain career transition assistance overseas. In linking to the curriculum of the Dale Carnegie Business Group, the program could effectively increase its selection of offerings to include courses in leadership and sales. European-based career transition programs alternatively represent a medium by which the Life After Hockey program may assist two segments of NHL alumni: those who are expatriates, and those for whom English is not a first language. Representative of the initiatives as a whole, the two forms of sponsorship attempt to not only account for various segments of prospective program participants, but also offer those participants some manner of additional support.

Chapter Six - Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The results and recommendations previously presented were the product of a lengthy and concerted examination into the Life After Hockey program and its past participants. Although a significant amount of effort was exerted in producing this product, the work was ultimately subject to several limitations. Program representatives did not, for example, make available: annual reports, a detailed timeline of program offerings, a complete list of program participants, contact information for known participants, nor any pertinent demographic information (e.g., length of playing career, age at program participation, service(s) utilized, and time between athletic retirement and program participation).[23] Without any such information: study recruitment was rather restricted (leading to the adoption of a form of convenience sampling), participant segmentation was complicated, and the program's profile was unable to be completed. As another limitation, the opinions of past program participants may not reflect those of other stakeholder groups (e.g., the NHL, NHLPA, NHL Alumni Association, and program leaders). Because alternative opinions were not sought, the study of the program's effectiveness, from a stakeholder approach, is partly incomplete.

To provide a more comprehensive assessment of the program it is suggested that a future study account for other stakeholder groups, including: the NHL, NHLPA, and NHL Alumni Association. The inclusion of these groups in a future study would allow researchers to: investigate perceived criteria for program success; examine the homogeneity, independence, and interplay of these criteria; and determine the overall effectiveness of the program from a multiple stakeholder approach. Disseminating the

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[23] Repeated requests for such information/documentation went unanswered (due to privacy concerns or otherwise).

results of such a study would also allow for program representatives to uncover not only which organizational processes require modification (if any), but also how the priorities of key stakeholders may be best satisfied.

In addition to the aforementioned stakeholder groups, researchers may also be interested in examining the program from the perspective of eligible non-participants (i.e., those NHL players/alumni who have not utilized any program service). As Sinclair and Orlick (1993) previously demonstrated in relation to the Canadian Olympic Athlete Career Centre, such an investigation may yield results pertaining to: levels of program awareness; reasons for non-participation; desired forms of assistance; and preferred modes of service delivery (e.g., seminar or workshop). Complementing the existent exploratory endeavours of the program (ones focusing on the services desired by alumni), this line of research would expectedly have immediate and practical utility.

Wylleman et al.'s (2004) seminal call for evaluative research may further be addressed by examining the career transition programs/initiatives of other North American professional sport leagues (e.g., the National Football League (NFL), Major League Soccer (MLS), and the National Lacrosse League (NLL)). One such league worthy of study is the NBA, where: a majority of alumni have gone bankrupt (often within five years of retirement) (Feschuk, 2008); active players are routinely the focus of union-led, transition-specific interventions (Beck, 2009); and a new transition assistance program has been developed (more specifically, by the National Basketball Retired Players Association) (Beck, 2009). Representing a similarly interesting case is the NFL, where alumni have long bickered with league and players' association representatives over disability and pension benefits (Brown, 2007; Chandler, 2010). These leagues, as

well as others, operate under unique sets of financial constraints and organizational priorities, and will most assuredly be found to provide disparate levels and forms of support; the likes of which are worthy of further investigation.

Potential for future research also exists in relation to organizational theory, and more specifically, matters of political manoeuvring and organizational structures; matters that were noted as affecting not only the Life After Hockey program, but also professional hockey as a whole. The NHLPA, for example, has, in recent years, been fraught with infighting and leadership instability, the results of which have undermined the efforts of the Life After Hockey program (e.g., in establishing consistent/greater ties to active NHL players). In examining the political negotiations that have occurred within the association, as well as the resulting ramifications, researchers may be able to gain valuable insight into both organizational linkages and politicking. Also made reference to by multiple study participants were organizational silos and operational boundaries (e.g., between the Life After Hockey program and the NHLPA, the Life After Hockey program and the NHLPA/NHL Substance Abuse & Behavioral Health Program, and the NHL and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)), structural elements that have seemingly and negatively affected the general welfare of NHL players (both current and former). Research into these elements of organizational theory may provide new opportunities and understanding in relation to knowledge management and/or interorganizational relationships.

Organizational theorists and psychologists alike may also be interested in examining athlete-related work-family conflict, a subject matter of some note amongst study participants. Suggested to be rather commonplace in professional sport, such

conflict was found to have the potential to both reinforce traditional familial roles and result in considerable personal tension. To better understand the gendered components and effects of this form of work-family conflict it is suggested that researchers study the spouses and families of current and former professional athletes.

Finally, it is worth noting that the evolution of professional sport will more than likely ensure the continued importance of research in the area of athletic career transition. The reason for this, as Participant 13 discussed, comes as a result of an ever-growing disparity in the lived experiences of professional athletes:

> The guys who came out before, who didn't have the dollars, needed to find something that they could make a living at. The guys who come out now are trying to find something to do to build their empire. You know, their kids' tuition's already paid for, their house is probably paid for, the money is put away for it; there's a steady stream of income coming in off that.... It's just two different avenues because our transitioning before was, 'I got to make a living for my family. I got to make a living for me. I got to cover health care benefits. Where am I going to get those?' Now, today, it's, 'What am I going to do with my time? How am I going to keep my empire and build on it? What am I going to do besides play golf every day?' It's a different type of transition from my transition, and I think it's ever so more important now that these guys understand what's going to happen to them after hockey.

In line with such sentiments, it should be expected that as professional sport continues to grow (e.g., in the size of leagues, salaries, and media attention), so too should the number of studies pertaining to athletic career transition.

Chapter Seven - Conclusion

Previous research endeavours in the area of athletic career retirement have produced several studies documenting the factors (e.g., identity, nature of athletic retirement) and resources (e.g., personal, social, institutional) affecting quality of transition, but comparatively fewer works regarding the effectiveness of particular institutional resources (e.g., career transition programs). In an effort to close this analytical gap (Wylleman et al., 2004), the present study set out to examine: the athletic career transitions of former professional hockey players; as well as the NHL's career transition program, the Life After Hockey program. Findings from the present study (interviews with 17 NHL alumni/former program participants) showed that:

- a career in elite professional hockey was both highly enjoyable and challenging;
- participants' reasons for athletic retirement varied (the most common of which included injury/fatigue/physical deterioration, loss of motivation/enjoyment, difficulties in lifestyle (e.g., work-family conflict), and deselection/lack of continued playing opportunities);
- quality of transition/post-playing life was affected by various factors and resources (the continuity between pre- and post-retirement environments, athletic identity (orientation), physical/psychological health (particularly with respect to post-concussion syndrome), selective coping strategies (e.g., pre-retirement planning (e.g., financial planning, continued education), positive reinterpretation, distraction, alcohol/substance abuse), social support, and institutional support);

- and the Life After Hockey program was both highly effective (albeit underdeveloped) and deserving of considerable credit (particularly for generating new occupational opportunities, assisting in the acquisition of new skills, and providing a system of continuous support).

The present study thus: adds to the existent body of athletic career transition literature (particularly in examining a previously ignored career transition program); and provides information relevant to not only the Life After Hockey program, but also current, past, and future NHL players.

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Table 1

Distinctions between the Paradigms of Positivism and Interpretivism

Assumptions	**Paradigm**	
	Positivism	**Interpretivism**
Ontology	External - Realist	Internal - Idealist Relativist
Epistemology	Objectivism	Subjectivism Constructionism
Methodology	Nomothetic Experimental Manipulative Methods: Close-ended questions Pre-determined approaches Predominantly quantitative data	Dialectical Ideographic Hermeneutical Methods: Open-ended questions Emerging approaches Predominantly qualitative data
Interests	Prediction and Control (Technical)	Understanding and Interpretation (Practical)

(Creswell, 2003; Sparkes, 1992)

Table 2

Summary of Techniques for Establishing Trustworthiness

Criterion Area	**Technique**
Credibility	(1) activities in the field that increase the probability of high credibility
	(a) prolonged engagement
	(b) persistent observation
	(c) triangulation (sources, methods, and investigators)
	(2) peer debriefing
	(3) negative case analysis
	(4) referential adequacy
	(5) member checks (in process and terminal)
Transferability	(6) thick description
Dependability	(7a) a dependability audit, including the audit trail
Confirmability	(7b) a confirmability audit, including the audit trail
All of the above	(8) a reflexive journal

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 328)

Table 3

Participants' Reasons for Retirement from Professional Hockey (N = 17)

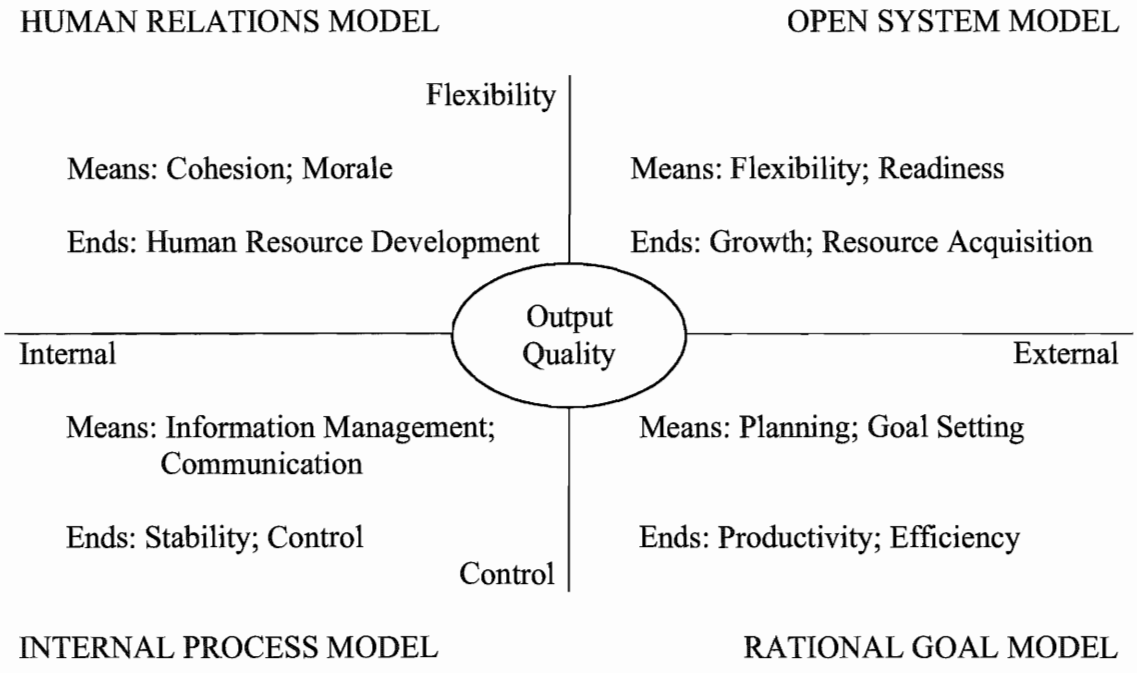
Reason for Retirement	**Number of Participants**
Injury, physical fatigue, and/or deterioration of ability	10
Loss of motivation and/or enjoyment	6
Difficulties with athletic lifestyle / Work-family conflict	6
Deselection / Lack of continued opportunities	5
Difficulties with a sport bureaucracy (i.e., coaches, team, athletic system)	3
Pursuit of new opportunities	3
Psychological fatigue	1

Table 4

Participants' Use of the Life After Hockey Program's Services (N = 17)

Type of Service Used	**Number of Participants**
Recent Iterations of the Program (2006-2010)	
Public speaking workshop	11
Sport broadcasting workshop	8
Business development workshop	4
Multiple workshops	9
Same form of workshop (public speaking)	5
Different forms of workshops (a combination of two or more of: public speaking, sport broadcasting, and business development)	5
Early Iterations of the Program (2002-2006)	
Career transition counseling	1

Figure 1. Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) Spatial Model of Effectiveness Criteria



Appendix

Biographical Sketch of Sample

Demographic Data

- The average age of the 17 study participants, at the time of interview, was approximately 50. Of the 17 study participants, two were more than 60-years of age, six were between 50- and 60-years of age, seven were between 40- and 50-years of age, and two were less than 40-years of age.
- At the time of interview, nine study participants had some level of post-secondary education, and six had obtained a post-secondary degree. Five of the 17 study participants obtained a university degree prior to athletic retirement, and of those, two work(ed) in the same field as their degree. Nine of the 17 study participants had no post-secondary education prior to athletic retirement.
- At the time of interview, participants were employed in a variety of areas, including: sport/fitness management (n = 8); sport broadcasting (n = 3); sales (assorted forms; n = 3); personal/group service (assorted forms; n = 6). Of the 17 study participants, eight were self-employed and/or an owner/operator of a venture, four were employed in multiple areas, and one was retired.
- Sixteen of the 17 study participants were married at the time of interview. Two of these 16 study participants were divorced and re-married. The remaining study participant was divorced and single (in a relationship, but not married) at the time of interview. In all, three study participants experienced a divorce (each experienced a divorce following athletic retirement). Each of the

17 study participants had/has at least one child. Fourteen of the 17 study participants were married at the time of athletic retirement.

Hockey-Specific Data

- Of the 17 participants, 11 played (what would be considered today as) Major Junior hockey in Canada prior to the start of an elite professional career (i.e., a career in either the WHA or NHL). Of the six remaining participants, five played Collegiate hockey in the United States of America (more specifically, in the NCAA), and one played (what would be considered today as) Tier Two Junior A hockey in Canada (prior to the start of an elite professional career).
- Thirteen of the 17 participants were drafted by NHL teams, and four were drafted into both the NHL and the WHA. The NHL draft positions of the participants ranged considerably, with four individuals having been chosen in the first round, three in rounds two to three, and another six in later rounds. The WHA draft positions of the four participants were similarly dispersed, with each of the participants having been chosen in a different round. Four study participants were not drafted.
- On average, the 17 study participants played approximately 377 regular season NHL games. Four participants were also members of the WHA, and played, on average, approximately 176 regular season games in the league. Fifteen of the 17 study participants also played in a North American minor professional hockey league. On average, the entire sample played approximately 170 regular season games at that level. Complete statistics regarding the participants' European careers were not available.

- The participants' careers in elite professional hockey ranged in length from four to 14 seasons. The participants' careers in the NHL, in particular, ranged in length from two to 13 seasons.
- Of the 17 study participants, one played elite professional hockey in the 1960s, eight in the 1970s, 12 in the 1980s, eight in 1990s, and one in the new millennium. Accounting for minor, European, and elite professional hockey careers, two participants played in the 1960s, eight in the 1970s, 12 in the 1980s, nine in the 1990s, and five in the new millennium.
- Four of the 17 study participants competed in the Olympic Games.
- Two of the 17 study participants were members of elite professional level championship winning teams.
- For six of the 17 study participants, the NHL represented the final destination in one's professional hockey career. On average, these six participants retired from hockey at the age of 34. The 11 participants whose careers ended in a league other than the NHL left elite professional hockey, on average, at the age of 28. Of these participants, six played their final professional hockey game overseas/five in a North American minor professional league. The non-elite professional hockey careers that followed the elite equivalent had an average length of five years, and increased the average age of retirement for these 11 individuals to 33. The average age of retirement (from all of professional hockey) for the entire sample (N = 17) was approximately 33.