Transition Experiences Following Involvement in an Elite Athlete Residential Program

Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology)

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University of Western Sydney
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Acknowledgements

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I would also like to thank the Australian Institute of Sport and my associate supervisor Mr Clark Perry, for their co-operation in making this project possible.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to pay a special tribute to my principal supervisor and mentor Associate Professor Patsy Tremayne, University of Western Sydney. Over the course of my sport psychology career Patsy Tremayne has had a significant impact as both a role model and supervisor. Her ongoing support and encouragement, and an unreserved belief in my ability to complete this research, were instrumental in helping me bring this project to fruition.
Preface

This study was conducted using a sample of adolescent athletes who participated in the residential program at the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) during the years 1993 to 1997. The issues raised in the results section of this thesis are specific to the athletes, staff members and AIS policies that were present during the research time period. As a consequence, the discussion and conclusions in this thesis are based upon the results of the data collected from this particular sample of athletes, and may not be reflective of experiences of athletes who have been involved in the AIS residential program more recently.

The nature of the Australian Institute of Sport is one of continuously evolving practices and procedures. A willingness on the part of the Institute to assist with an investigation into the experiences of residential athletes indicates an interest in athlete welfare, and a clear desire to evaluate program effectiveness.
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Transition Experiences Following Involvement in an Elite Athlete Residential Program

Abstract

This study explored the transition experiences of adolescent athletes following their involvement in an elite athlete residential program in Australia. No comprehensive research currently exists in relation to individuals who must make the transition from an elite institutional lifestyle to a new life organisation. In order to examine the experiences of athletes involved in this type of transitional event, Schlossberg, Waters and Goodman’s Transition Model (1995) was selected as the theoretical framework to guide data collection and analysis. The aims of the study were to determine the relationship between transition model variables and athlete reactions to the transition event, the incidence of positive versus negative reactions to the event, identification of variables that assisted or hindered the adaptation process, and the usefulness of the revised model for investigating a transition event. A multi-method approach was used, with 39 athletes completing a survey relating to their transition experiences, 13 athletes and 12 family members participating further in an interview format. A qualitative analysis of an investigative report and media articles relevant to the study was also conducted. The results indicated specific variables in the model that were related to transition reactions. Eighteen athletes experienced a negative reaction to the transition event, seven had an indifferent reaction, and fourteen had a positive reaction. Specific variables associated with the model were also found to assist or hinder the adaptation process. The results of the project also provided support for the usefulness of using Schlossberg’s et al. revised model for investigating a transitional event. The findings clearly illustrated quantitative and qualitative differences between the various transition experiences, and highlighted areas for future consideration in research and development of transition programs for institutional settings.
Chapter 1
A Transitional Perspective

The emergence of professionalism in sport has led to increasing demands on athletes with respect to quality, quantity and consistency in the performance environment. Government funded programs, scholarships and private sponsorships, have provided many elite athletes with an opportunity to embrace sporting pursuits as a career choice. In line with these increased opportunities and improvements in infrastructure, there has been a shift toward a more systematic process of athlete selection and training, particularly in regard to the identification of talented athletes during the important developmental years.

As part of this process, talented adolescent athletes may be afforded the opportunity to participate in a residential program where they are enmeshed in a sport-orientated lifestyle. The efficacy of such a process is easily measured in terms of the overall performance outcomes of athletes involved in such programs, but there is also a responsibility to gain an understanding of what impact these programs have on adolescent development.

The experiences of individuals undergoing a transition out of a residential program, and their ability to cope with the adaptation from institutional living to a new life organisation, is one avenue for gaining insight into the impact residential programs can have on the personal growth of
athletes. Examining such a transitional event provides the opportunity to
investigate the role of physical, psychological, sociological, situational and
historical factors that have the potential to influence individual experiences
(Magnusson, 1988; Santrock, 1995). In order to achieve a greater understanding
of the role of each of these factors, a theoretical framework is required which
allows the researcher to investigate the multitude of variables likely to be
present in such a complex real life experience

A Theoretical Framework

"In psychological theory and empirical research, one basic prerequisite
for overcoming fragmentation is a common theoretical frame of reference for
planning, implementing, and interpreting empirical research" (Magnusson,
1988, p.20). Although such an assumption is a fundamental prerequisite, the
field of psychology does present the researcher with a vast array of theoretical
perspectives within which to proceed, with no one theoretical perspective
having ultimate superiority over another. As a consequence, the choice of a
theoretical framework will ultimately be influenced, not only by the nature of
the phenomenon to be studied, but also the predilections of the researcher
involved.

Given the complex nature of real-life events and individual experiences,
it can be argued that one theoretical perspective may not be sufficient to
elucidate the issues involved in a transitional event. An eclectic framework may
prove to be a more beneficial approach, with individual theoretical perspectives integrated to form one common theoretical frame of reference. The concept of theoretical triangulation embraces such an approach, through the use of multiple theories as a means of generating methodology and interpreting information (Brannen, 1992). It recognises complexity and diversity and that multiple realities exist (Tindall, 1994), thereby allowing the researcher to look for patterns and explanations, without being limited by one particular perspective. An example of such an approach is the transition theory and model proposed by Schlossberg (1981), which incorporates not only the transition perspective, but also “draws heavily on the work and ideas of others” (Schlossberg, 1981, p.3), including the contextualist and life-span perspectives.

The transition perspective focuses on life events entailing change, and the ability of an individual to use available resources to adapt to change. The emphasis of this perspective is understanding and evaluation of an individual’s behaviour in relation to the specific transitional event, rather than on chronological age or the time of life at which the event occurred (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). The perspective focuses on the nature of changes in assumptions about oneself and the world as a result of an event that requires a corresponding change in behaviour and relationships, and the adaptation process required for incorporation of these changes into a new stable life organisation (Schlossberg, 1981).
The life-span perspective considers the role of developmental change throughout an individual’s life, without over-emphasizing the importance of any one particular phase as proposed by stage theorists (Santrock, 1995). Changes in physical, cognitive, social and emotional development associated with infancy and childhood, continue on through adolescence and adulthood. As a result, the focus of this perspective is individuality and issues of change and continuity. Consideration of an experience or ‘event’ requires an understanding of the types of changes that are likely to occur, in what phase of development they are likely to be present, and the factors that may precipitate and determine these changes (Baltes, 1987; Baltes, Featherman, & Lerner, 1990; Baltes, Reese, & Lipsitt, 1980; Santrock, 1995). By incorporating the life-span perspective, the transition theory allows for the possibility that reactions and experiences to a transitional event may be relevant to the issues associated with the developmental phase of the individual, in this particular instance the adolescent years.

Closely related to the life-span perspective is the contextualist perspective. This theoretical perspective views ‘events’ which occur in human experiences as being embedded in the historical, cultural and social context in which they occur. Pepper’s (1942) philosophical idea of contextualism was one of context as an historical event, however the meaning of the word context can be open to a variety of interpretations. As a consequence, there has been some conflict regarding the nature and relevance of contextualism in terms of
understanding developmental change (Lyddon, 1995; Steenbarger, 1991).

Multiple meanings have been described in the behavioural, social and cognitive sciences, with some meanings emphasizing context-as-place, rather than context-as-history, as conceptualised by Pepper (Morris, 1997).

Although interpretations may vary as to the exact meaning of the word contextualism, the basic assumption is that “human acts or ‘events’ are active, dynamic, and developmental moments of a continuously changing reality” in which “individuals are accorded a primary intentional role rather than a passive or reactive one in this process of change” (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988, p.65). Contextualism emphasizes external rather than internal determinants of behaviour, by acknowledging the importance of social and historical determinants and their role in developmental processes (Barlow, 1997; Jacobsen, 1997; Thomas, 1996a). “A critical contextualist must always ask himself or herself: Under what historical, social and material conditions do these ‘irrational’ or ‘maladaptive’ feelings, thoughts and behaviours arise?” (Thomas, 1996b, p.534).

Although a number of different transition models have been proposed and applied in previous research, particularly in reference to career termination in sport (Lavallee, 2000), these models have somewhat limited application for understanding transitions that may have multiple endings and transition processes arising from the same contextual event. A combination of transition, life-span and contextualist theoretical perspectives into one transitional model,
allows the researcher greater flexibility to understand more complex events that may require a re-organisation of environment, lifestyle, behaviours and attitudes.

A Transition Theory and Model

Schlossberg (1981) suggests that a “transition can be said to occur if an event or non-event results in a change about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behaviour and relationships” (p.5). This need to adapt behaviours and relationships as a consequence of environmental and situational factors, ultimately leads to some degree of stress as the individual adjusts to the changes being experienced. The nature, strength and duration of this stress is likely to differ, as each individual finds ways of coping and adapting to meet the demands of their new circumstances.

Adaptation is the process by which an individual moves from being preoccupied with the change in circumstances, to integration of the transition into a new life organisation. Schlossberg et al. (1995) theorizes that the ease with which this adaptation process occurs, is dependent on the individual’s perceived or actual balance of resources. These resources are the physical, social, situational and psychological variables present before and during the transition.
Schlossberg's (1981) original Model for Analyzing Human Adaptation to a Transitional Event (Figure 1) illustrates this concept by identifying specific variables that have the potential to be used as resources during the adaptation phase.

The model identifies three primary resource areas, namely the characteristics of the situation, characteristics of the transition environment, and the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition. From these resources, specific variables may act as an asset or liability during the adaptation process.

An asset is any resource that is productive in helping the individual to make the required changes, whereas a liability is any resource that impedes the individual from making the necessary adjustments to meet new demands. Schlossberg (1981) contends that it is the ratio of assets to liabilities that determines the ease and speed with which adaptation occurs. If perceived or real assets outweigh the number of liabilities, then adaptation is faster and more positive than situations where liabilities outweigh the number of assets.
Figure 1. Schlossberg’s (1981) Model for Analyzing Human Adaptation to Transition
A revised transition model was later proposed by Schlossberg et al. (1995), that incorporates the variables presented in the original model, but in a different conceptual design, as illustrated in Figure 2.

*Figure 2. Schlossberg, Waters & Goodman (1995) Revised Transition Model*

The revised model extends the original concept by placing resources, not just under categories, but also within the transition continuum. In terms of application to research and consulting environments, the revised model
indicates three primary phases that the researcher or counselor needs to consider when assessing the degree of change required, and the resources available to the individual. The researcher or counselor is also required to make a subjective assessment as to which resources are acting as assets or liabilities during the transition, and the subsequent ratio of assets to liabilities.

Critique of the Transition Model

Research using Schlossberg’s transition model has predominantly been qualitative in nature, with issues relating to transitions in the work place, retirement, relocation, life-style changes and education (Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg et al., 1995). The focus of these studies has been toward using the model to develop and test intervention strategies for participants or clients undergoing a transition. From these studies it appears that the model is an effective framework for understanding the complex array of variables involved in such an experience, and is a suitable method for identifying specific areas where intervention might be required prior to and during a transition event.

Quantitative and qualitative studies have also been undertaken which investigate the link between adaptation to a transitional event and specific variables identified in the Schlossberg model. These studies relate to sport and non-sport issues, incorporating a mixture of transitional events, and a wide variety of selected variables for measurement. To date, however, there has been
no published research that illustrates an attempt to measure all aspects of the model using the same sample.

One of the difficulties associated with using such a complex model, is the logistical problem of measuring all the variables in an equitable manner. Some variables lend themselves to quantitative analysis, such as personality traits or self-esteem, whereas information on other variables like personal transition experiences, are likely to be better represented through qualitative analysis. This makes it extremely difficult to use a method such as structured equation modeling to establish relationship patterns within the model.

The type of measurement selected may also be influenced by the sample of individuals involved in a research project, or the specific type of transition event. As a result, the method chosen to measure a specific variable or overall outcome is, to some extent, a subjective decision by the researcher. This is reflected in the fact that transition research has used various types of standardised measurements, as well as subjective open-ended questions and interview structures. Research using various types of measurement are likely to yield the best overall results for complex issues, however this approach also increases the difficulty of establishing a structured methodological approach that can be applied with different samples and transitional situations.

Attempting to gain some insight into each of the variables presented in the model also presents another problem, namely the amount of data to be collected from individuals involved in the research. In order to gain a broader
view of the model, in-depth information on some variables may need to be
foregone in order to collect more information on a greater variety of issues.
However, by gaining a broader understanding of how each variable is related to
a transition experience for the same sample, it may give more insight into which
specific areas of the process are likely to be the most influential for adaptation.

A further measurement issue with the use of the Schlossberg (1981)
model is the subjective assessment of resources as assets or liabilities. In the
model each variable is simply designated as an asset or liability, without any
account for the weighting of each variable in the model. The importance, or
weighting of a variable, may change for each individual or situation, and it
cannot be assumed that because an individual has more assets than liabilities,
they will have a positive adaptation. A situation can arise where one liability
may be of such importance to an individual, that it could ‘outweigh’ the benefits
of two or three assets. Even in different types of transition experiences, the
weighting of specific variables may change because of the unique
circumstances of that particular event, or the interaction with different
individual experiences. The transition research conducted to date does indicate
that the variable making the difference in the adaptation process can differ
depending on the type of transition, and the group of individuals involved.

Of similar importance is the fact that the first part of the revised
Schlossberg model, Approaching the Transition, is not factored in as a resource
that will affect the adaptation process. The model acknowledges the importance
of the type, context and impact of the event, but does not specifically account
for this effect in the assessment of assets and liabilities available to the
individual; nor does it indicate a specific method of measuring how these
factors might influence the resources, other than a subjective assessment of the
amount of difference between the pre and post transition environments.

Given the problems associated with determining adaptation based on a
ratio of assets or liabilities, further research needs to be conducted to determine
the viability of the model using other methods, and the impact of each of the
variables in the transition model, in relation to one specific event.

The objective of this study, therefore, is not to undertake an assessment
of the model using a structured modeling approach, or as a test of the
asset/liability ratio as proposed by Schlossberg; but rather as a means of
directing the measurement and identification of variables that are related to
adaptive and maladaptive transition experiences in a unique situation.

Further, Schlossberg's et al. (1995) Revised Transition Model will be
extended to include variables that are likely to be relevant for understanding the
experiences of elite adolescent athletes who have lived in a residential
environment. An overview of existing transition research provides some insight
into which variables and measurements need to be considered, and inclusion of
model variables will be illustrated and discussed in forthcoming chapters
relating to Approaching the Transition, The Transition Process, and Potential
Resources.
Chapter 2

Approaching the Transition

The study of a transitional event does not begin and end with the event itself. Even before an individual is forced to deal with the practical reality of a change in circumstances, there are factors that may begin to influence their reaction to the upcoming event. The initial phase of the Schlossberg et al. (1995) model, Approaching the Transition, identifies three key areas that have the capacity to impact on the transition process. Figure 3 provides an overview of the variables to be considered, under the three factors proposed by Schlossberg, namely the type, context and impact of the event.

The type of transitional event, the nature of the pre-transition environment, and the choices available to the individual at that time, are all factors that have the potential to influence perceptions and actual events that occur prior to and during the adaptation phase. Of similar importance is the amount of change that is going to be required in order for the individual to adapt to their new circumstances, and the impact such changes will have on the psychological, physical and social functioning of the individual.

The Type of Event

Schlossberg’s et al. (1995) transition theory contends that an individual can experience three basic types of transitional events, those that are anticipated, unanticipated or non-events. Anticipated transitions are events that predictably occur in the course of an individual’s life cycle.
Figure 3. Approaching the transition event
For most individuals these anticipated transitions relate to specific role changes associated with developmental periods, such as marriage, starting a job for the first time, and retirement. For athletes, anticipated events might also be expected progressions from developmental programs to elite or professional status, and in the case of scholarship holders, a termination of assistance at a pre-determined time.

An unanticipated transition occurs when an event caused change that was unpredictable and unexpected at the time, such as injury, illness, personal crises, relationship difficulties or organisational decisions. Finally, non-event transitions occur when an individual expects an event to occur, but it did not eventuate. In this instance the possibility of non-renewal of a residential scholarship, or non-selection in a national or professional team or squad.

Research has indicated that on-time or expected life events will be perceived as less stressful than events that occur at a developmentally atypical point (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Schlossberg, 1981). Stevens (1990) proposes that this pattern exists because “life events that occur ‘on time’ in our expectations do not usually precipitate a crisis or self-questioning about their appropriateness. It is the unanticipated or non-events that cause problems” (p.9). In contrast, transitions that are anticipated provide an opportunity for individuals to plan and make preparations for the event, thereby assisting the adjustment process (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990).
Studies into retirement transitions in sport have indicated that athletes who experience career endings associated with advancement in age, a normative and expected event, have higher levels of life satisfaction than athletes who retire as a consequence of injury, de-selection, or other factors (Baillie, 1993; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Similarly, athletes who move onto another phase of their life because they feel they have fulfilled what they had set out to do, generally experience few difficulties during the transition process (Ungerleider, 1997). In contrast, changes that are unexpected have been found to be associated with negative transition experiences, poorer emotional adjustment, and lower life satisfaction (Baillie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Kleiber, Greendorfer, Blinde, & Samdahl, 1987; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Taylor & Ogilive, 1994; Werthner & Orlick, 1986).

It has been suggested that the negative consequences of unanticipated events may be the result of a lack of preparation, and a failure to discuss ways of dealing with disappointments and unexpected events before they occur (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Stevens, 1990). As a consequence of this lack of preparation, athletes may find they "have few career options" and "lack direction and goals" (Crook & Robertson, 1991, p.118). Even where an unexpected event is positive in nature, there may still be some stress associated with the event due to the need to make adaptations with limited time to prepare (Greenberg, 1999; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Stevens, 1990).
In relation to a non-event, the reaction to such an event is likely to vary depending on whether the non-occurrence was perceived as a benefit or a loss to the individual (Schlossberg et al., 1995). An example of a non-event in a sporting setting is the failure to be selected for a team where an athlete anticipated that such selection would occur. In a recent study by Munroe, Albinson, and Hall (1999) on the effects of non-selection in female varsity sport, the majority of athletes experienced negative perceptions immediately following the event. However, perceptions became more positive over a four month period, with fewer uncertain expectations, reduced levels of disappointment, and fewer regrets.

In Schlossberg’s theory the emphasis is placed on the nature of the event, by assuming that if an event occurs at an unexpected time the individual will experience a greater degree of disruption and a more difficult adaptation. More recently Pancer, Hunsberger, Pratt, and Alisat (2000) have suggested that negative and positive reactions to a transitional event are not just linked to whether the event was anticipated or not, but also the type of expectancies the individual has about the event.

They identified four types of individuals based upon analysis of students’ expectations regarding their transition into university. Those who had very positive expectancies and few concerns were classified as ‘optimistic’. Students who had equally positive expectations, but who were also aware that university would require them to meet new challenges and adapt, were
categorised as 'prepared'. The third grouping of 'fearful' described individuals who expressed high levels of fear and apprehension; and the final 'complacent' group had very few expectations about university life.

Their results indicated that individuals who had more complex expectations about what would happen during the transition event, experienced less stress and better adjustment. Those who were categorised as optimistic or prepared, adjusted better to university life. The authors concluded that this was probably as a consequence of their ability to think ahead about the difficulties they might experience, and therefore give some thought about how to deal with those difficulties before they eventuated (Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, & Hunsberger, as cited in Pancer et al., 2000).

A recent study into the experiences of 70 students making the transition into the American college system, provided further support for this proposition. The results indicated that unrealistic expectations about social adjustments caused distress when individuals were confronted with the reality of the challenging environment of the college system (Paul & Brier, 2001).

These studies indicate that reactions to a transitional event are not solely associated with whether the individual was expecting it to occur or not. Even where an event occurs at a typical developmental point, adjustment issues may still exist if the individual has not adequately considered what changes are about to occur. One of the factors that may influence this preparation process is the
context in which the event occurs, especially in relation to the type of
information and support that an individual has access to.

**Context of the Event**

The context in which the event or non-event occurs is important to
consider because it gives some basis for understanding why individuals might
react differently in the same situation. Investigation of the pre-transition
environment and options available at that time, provides an understanding of the
emotional, behavioural, psychological and social contexts that precede the
transition event itself, and thereby provides a baseline from which to interpret
the extent and nature of the changes required.

For the purposes of this study the context of the event is the nature of
the environment in which the participants were residing immediately prior to
the transition event occurring, and the choices available to them at that time. In
this particular instance, the pre-transition environment is an elite residential
sport institute in Australia; and the type of changes likely to be of importance
involve the nature of relationships with peers, coaches and other institutional
staff, training requirements and expectations, and the need for changes to daily
routines, behaviours and attitudes as a consequence of the transition.

Of similar importance are the lifestyle options available to an individual
at the time their involvement in the residential program ceases. The variety of
choices available in terms of living arrangements, academic pursuits, career
opportunities, and the ability to continue in elite sport, are likely to influence
the adaptation process, particularly if choices are limited or undesired by the
individual.

*Pre-Transition Environment – An Elite Athlete Residential Program*

There are various types of residential environments that an individual
may be involved in during their adolescent years. Boarding schools, higher
education institutions, and elite sporting programs provide unique
circumstances that inevitably require an individual to make a transition both
into, and out of, a structured and often controlling environment.

To date there is insufficient empirical research that has investigated the
impact of these environments on the psychological, emotional and social
development of adolescents with regard to their transition experiences at either
the beginning or the ending of their involvement in the residential program.
Before examining the empirical findings in relation to residential programs, it is
prudent to gain a basic understanding of the residential environment to be
considered for this study.

The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), hereinafter referred to as the
Institute, is a statutory authority that was created by the Australian Federal
Government to promote and develop opportunities for Australian athletes in the
pursuit of sporting excellence (*Australian Institute of Sport Athlete Handbook*,
1995). The Institute has been operating since 1981, and currently offers
residential and non-residential scholarships in 25 sports. Residential programs are based in Canberra, Australia, with a number of satellite programs operating throughout other parts of the country. The objectives of the AIS are:

- to enhance the sporting performances of Australia’s elite and potential elite athletes and teams
- to enhance the personal, educational and vocational development opportunities for elite athletes

(Australian Institute of Sport Athlete Handbook, 2000, p.1)

Acceptance of a residential scholarship requires an athlete to live in residency for a specified time period, either at the Institute in Canberra or at a satellite venue. Athletes are required to train and compete nationally and internationally during their residency, with time demands differing depending on the sport. Residential athletes are also required to undertake a technical or academic course, or find suitable full-time or part-time employment during their stay. As well as having access to elite level coaching and world-class sport facilities, a residential scholarship also provides access to sport science, sports medicine, and sport psychology services.

In relation to the non-sport aspect of the residential program, athletes have access to adult residential carers, career and education support, and life skills services. The Athlete Career and Education (ACE) Program in particular, has been acknowledged as one of the most comprehensive and preeminent
athlete support programs in the world (Anderson & Morris, 2000). Athlete services staff members provide this support, including administrators, house parents, athlete supervisors and career advisors. The Australian Institute of Sport Athlete Handbook (1995, 2000) describes staff functions as follows:

- Supervision and care of the young athletes
- Care of sick athletes
- Enrolment of students in appropriate courses
- Supervision and monitoring of study sessions
- Liaison with schools about attendance and study progress
- Expert tutoring in academic subjects
- Ensuring good living conditions for all
- Counselling and support for personal problems
- Provision of computers and help with their use
- Ensuring compliance with residence rules
- Provision of recreational opportunities and equipment
- Assistance in finding jobs
- Personal development courses

As part of the orientation process into a residential program, the Institute highlights a number of key areas that are related to adjustment issues associated with a transitional event. The Australian Institute of Sport Athlete Handbook (2000, p.5) describes some of the challenges that residential athletes are likely to experience:
You’re here because you have been identified as being among the best in your sport in Australia. The challenge ahead is to develop that potential so you can take your place in competition on the world stage. Perhaps you have never lived away from home before. You may already be an independent sort of person, or your parents may have done everything for you up to now. Whatever the case, you are probably about to have many new experiences and undergo a number of important changes in your life. You are now part of a community. We will try to make life as pleasant as possible, but we can’t do everything for you. You’re going to have to look after yourself in most things. The Residence Program is committed to the holistic development of each athlete. It provides support and enrichment for athletes in personal, social, vocational and recreational matters, in addition to maximizing their sporting development. We aim to develop each individual’s interpersonal and community skills in the pursuit of a positive and harmonious community attitude. Life will be very busy and many demands will be made of you. The AIS expects you to maximize your experiences, while staying within the rules and guidelines.
As previously noted, there is currently insufficient information regarding the impact of this type of residential environment on the development of adolescent athletes. However, research relating to the experiences of college athletes in the United States has suggested that transition experiences are likely to be related to the institutional context of the setting in which their athletic careers have taken place (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Parker, 1994).

Dorsel and Wages (1993) assessed the perceptions of students and parents regarding the impact of residential living for academically gifted students, and found parents and students perceived that residential living had a moderate impact on family functioning. Students also showed a significant increase in the desired interval between home visits, whereas parents showed no change, indicating a shift toward more independent behaviours and attitudes by the students.

These types of changes in family functioning, and decreased contact with family members, may influence the choices that an athlete makes regarding their living arrangements when their residency is completed. Of further consequence, is the impact that relationship changes may have on family functioning where an athlete returns to the family unit.

Other relationship issues may also play a role in determining reactions to the transition out of an institutional setting, in particular the effects of homesickness, and maintenance or loss of social networks. Hawkins and Blann (1996) surveyed 124 elite athletes from the Australian Institute of Sport, and 74
from the Victorian Institute of Sport, representing 19 different sports. Their results indicated that residential athletes at the Australian Institute of Sport expressed some “misgivings about the difficulties in maintaining contacts and friendships with people back home”. At times, “they wanted to be with their families more and in the familiar surroundings of their homes and communities” (p.60).

Feelings of homesickness have been found to be associated with higher levels of psychological disturbance, poorer health, decreased cognitive functioning, and negative initial impressions of novel environments (Fisher, Frazer, & Murray, 1986; Fisher & Hood, 1987, 1988; Thurber, 1995, 1999; Thurber, Sigman, Weisz, & Schmidt, 1999; Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1999).

Fisher et al. (1986) conducted three qualitative studies investigating the experiences of children aged 11 to 17 years who were boarding school residents, and found that the majority of participants (71-76%) experienced homesickness. The results also indicated that individuals who had previously lived in a boarding residence were less likely to experience distress in comparison to those who had no experience.

Homesickness can also be associated with short-term separation from the family unit, as indicated in the results of the study by Thuber et al. (1999), who investigated homesickness patterns of 117 girls aged 8 to 17 who attended a 2 week camp. Their results indicated that high expectations of homesickness,
negative separation attitudes, low decision control, and little previous experience with separation, were all predictors associated with homesickness. Further, caregivers at the camp were asked to provide ratings in relation to the symptomology associated with homesickness, and the results indicated that homesick individuals experienced lower social status, and exhibited more somatic complaints, social problems and externalizing behaviours.

Impairments to social functioning associated with homesick appear to include not only a lower social status, but also difficulty making friends, and experiencing anxiety relating to school attendance (Thuber et al., 1999; Van Tilburg et al., 1999). Similarly, a recent study by Paul and Brier (2001) into the transition experiences of 70 college students during the first 10 weeks of their first semester, found that students who were highly preoccupied with their pre-college friendships exhibited poorer adjustment to college. The results indicated that the propensity to focus on friendship in the home environment, interfered with the participants’ ability to form friendships in their new environment.

As a consequence, individuals who experience homesickness and social difficulties may perceive a move away from the residential program as being a more positive event than those whose changes in family and social relationships illustrate a growing independence and separation from their familial environment. A chance to rekindle established relationships may be a
comforting thought for some, whilst others may wish to move onto a new phase of social development.

Although the premise of the residential program at the Institute is to encourage independence and self-sufficiency (Australian Institute of Sport Athlete Handbook, 2000), the insulated and regulated environment of an elite sport institute may also elicit some degree of dependency that may inhibit the adaptation process away from the institutional setting. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) concluded that if an athletic environment provides a climate where the athlete is overindulged, overprotected, or constrained in the level of decision-making and input required in day-to-day experiences, an athlete may “assume that the athletic system will continue to take care of them even after their playing days are over.” (p.9). Because “they believe they are entitled to special care and attention”, they may be “less likely to work to develop life and career alternatives outside their sport” (p.9).

Another significant difference between non-residential and residential athletes in an elite sporting environment, is the level of exposure to individuals with similar abilities and values. Research has indicated that talented children are characterised by a need to fulfill their potential, and to be involved with a similar peer group (Buescher, 1985; Feldhusen, 1991).

Clark and Zimmerman (1988) interviewed twenty 13 to 17 year old gifted art students involved in a two-week residential program, and found that the majority of students expressed pleasure at being grouped with others who
had similar interests and abilities, and enjoyed working at a high level of
difficulty. These findings have also been replicated with students who have
attended academic residential programs over a number of years, where students
“gave a strong message about the need for true peers, about the happiness of
finding people with whom they felt understood......the relief of meeting others
who had lived through similar experiences brought them together in strongly
bonded friendships” (Enersen, 1993, p.173).

In contrast to the beneficial aspects of these studies, research into the
‘little fish, big pond’ effect in academic and sport settings, indicates that domain
specific self-concepts can be negatively affected by interaction with similarly
talented peers. Individuals involved in gifted and talented academic programs
experienced declines in academic self-concepts, but not in non-academic self-
concepts, and these findings were consistent over gender and age groupings
(Marsh, Chesson, Craven, & Roche,1995; Marsh & Parker, 1984).

The results of these studies highlight the possibility that the level of
satisfaction and enjoyment that an individual experiences by being surrounded
by similarly talented athletes, may have an impact on their desire to continue in
such a program when the transition event occurs. A separation from the elite
peer group may cause distress for those who are challenged by, and enjoy the
elite environment; but for those who experience additional pressure or
disruption to athletic self-concepts, a move away from such an environment
may be a relief.
The influence of the peer group extends even further, because athletes may experience a narrowing of peer group members and henceforth role identities, due to the commitment required to compete at an elite level (Brewer, 1993). Friendships are likely to exist primarily in the sporting environment, particularly in a residential setting, and these friendships and experiences with teammates are viewed as important in terms of social support (Hawkins & Blann, 1996; Scanlan, Ravizza, & Stein, 1989). Athletes who fail to gain acceptance by their athletic peers, or who experience loss of friendships due to relocation, may suffer consequences such as lack of support, or feelings of being alone or friendless (Baillie, 1993; Crook & Robertson, 1991; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991).

The impact of such consequences may influence the transition process in two primary ways. An athlete who has failed to assimilate into the residential setting may find it a relief to return to familiar peer group settings, whereas those who developed strong social ties within the program are likely to experience a disruption to their social network similar to that experienced as a result of the transition into the residential program. Given that the Institute’s residential program caters for athletes from all over Australia, the movement of athletes out of the residency is going to result in dispersion of individuals throughout the continent and overseas, thereby magnifying the difficulties associated with remaining closely connected to those peers.
Another important relationship that can influence the transition experience, is that of the coach and athlete. Relationships with coaches are an important contextual aspect of residential living because the coach is likely to be the most prominent adult figure in the adolescent’s life at that time. In the elite athlete environment an athlete spends a significant amount of time with their coach, and just as parenting style has the capacity to influence an individual’s development (Santrock, 1995), it must be acknowledged that a coach’s style of communication and behaviour may also have an influence on individual development.

Compatible coach-athlete relationships are “characterized by good communication and the presence of rewarding behavior flowing from coach to athlete... In compatible dyads, coach and athlete freely interact with each other. There is a feeling of mutual respect, an appreciation of each other’s roles and a desire to communicate honest feelings” (Cox, 1998, p.322). These coaches “consistently reward athletes for effort and performance” in the form of “praise, acknowledgement of effort and recognition of outstanding performance” (p.323). In contrast, incompatible dyads are characterised by feelings of detachment, isolation, poor communication, and lack of rewarding behaviour on the part of the coach. (Cox, 1998).

Research into transition experiences such as retirement, burnout and injury, have indicated that interpersonal conflict and negative coaching behaviours are related to negative experiences during such an event (Scanlan et
al., 1991; Vealey, Armstrong, & Comar, 1998). Udry, Gould, Bridges and Tuffy (1997) interviewed 31 athletes who had experienced burnout or season-ending injuries. The results indicated that where burnout had occurred, athletes perceived that their coaches provided more negative influences in the form of pressure, unrealistic expectations, idea conflicts and lack of belief in an athlete; rather than positive influences such as support, empathy and belief in ability. However, there is no specific research to indicate the role of the coach in positive transitions such as career advancement.

What is evident is that coaching behaviour and communication patterns can have an impact on athlete reactions to an event. In a transitional context, these behaviours have the potential to influence an athlete’s perceptions about the nature of the event, and beliefs regarding their sporting ability and future prospects. An open and encouraging communication style would facilitate greater information sharing to assist an athlete with preparation for the transition, and also a degree of social support before and during the process. Where a significant level of attachment has been achieved between a coach and athlete, the process of separation during the transition may heighten an athlete’s emotional reaction to the event due to the loss of such a significant relationship.

Of further consequence is whether an athlete perceives that their coach has some form of control over their post-transition opportunities. Parker (1994) interviewed a small sample of elite football players, and found that players perceived that coaches and other personnel had enormous power and control
over their futures. Similarly, Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) found that female
gymnasts who felt their coaches exerted absolute control over them, seemed to
have more difficult transitions. The athletes in their sample described feelings
of bitterness, regret and anger over the power imbalance in their relationship
with their coach. These type of perceptions are likely to influence an athlete’s
perceptions of control during a transitional event, particularly if the power is
realistic in terms of future selection and advancement in their chosen sport.

Another contextual issue that is closely linked to the pre-transition
environment, is the range of choices available to the individual at the time the
event occurs. The residential environment has an important role to play in
relation to what opportunities are made available to an athlete during their
residency. There is also a need to investigate whether athletes were prepared to
avail themselves of the services provided in the Institute environment, what
choices athletes made when required to leave the residency, and what affect
those choices had on the transition process itself.

*Choices Available at the Time of the Event*

The choices available to the individual at the time of a transitional event
refer to decisions regarding continuing participation in sport, level of
participation, career and academic opportunities, and living arrangements. The
range and suitability of choices that an athletes is faced with at the time of
leaving the residential program, certainly has the potential to influence perceptions relating to satisfaction with the post-transition environment.

There is very little empirical research that provides an understanding of where athletes choose to reside following involvement in a residential program, and what type of factors influence those decisions. For adolescent athletes, one factor in determining whether an athlete returns to the family home is likely to be the nature of the familial relationship prior to entry into the program. Of particular importance may be the opportunity for home visits, given that athletes in an elite sport program may have inadequate access to the family unit due to distance or training/competition constraints.

A study by Pats (1987) considered the variables that affected college seniors' expectations about returning to the family home following college residency, and the results indicated that a number of pre-existing familial conditions may be related to a desire to return to the family unit. They found a weak, but positive relationship, between the level of family cohesion prior to residency, and the amount of home visits that occurred during the residential stay.

In relation to athlete samples, at this time there is no clear evidence relating to what factors are influential in post-residential choices in terms of living arrangements. Variables such as independent financial status, career or academic opportunities, sport or organisation sponsorships, or personal
relationships, are likely to play a role in limiting or enhancing the range of accommodation choices available to an athlete in transition.

Another area where choices need to be made is the direction of an individual’s sport and non-sport career. An athlete leaving a residential program in Australia can follow a number of different paths depending on the opportunities available at that time. Athletes may return to previous or new training environments and continue at the same level of competition, change sports, commence a professional sport career, retire, or begin a new career.

Research into the area of post-sport career opportunities has indicated that athletes are likely to be concerned about issues such as employment and future financial status (Menkehorst & Van Den Berg, 1997). Athletes who possess limited skills applicable to the non-athletic workforce, or who have limited financial resources, are most susceptible to perceiving a transitional event as threatening, and to increased levels of negative affect (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

In contrast, having alternative interests, employment opportunities and non-sport related relationships, has been related to positive adaptation to a transitional event (Baillie, 1993; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). For retiring athletes, there is some evidence that being able to remain involved in their sport in some capacity will increase the likelihood of better adjustment to retirement (Baillie, 1993). A number of studies have also indicated that athletes who engage in career planning are more likely to
experience a more positive transition into a new environment, and have more positive perceptions regarding satisfaction with future life situations (Hawkins & Blann, 1996; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Zaichkowsky, Lipton, & Tucci, 1997).

In relation to education status, it is highly probable that an athlete’s education level will be related to their perceptions regarding future career opportunities. A study of 124 Australian Institute of Sport and Victorian Institute of Sport athletes (Hawkins & Blann, 1996) concluded that educational levels might be a factor in influencing the perceptions of how long sport careers would last, and the importance of balancing work, education and life situations.

Athletes involved in the residential program at the AIS are exposed to various avenues that enable them to assess their sport, career and academic choices prior to the transition out of the residency, in particular the Athlete Career and Education (ACE) program. Athletes involved in the ACE program have espoused the benefits of future career and education planning. Hamish McDonald, gold medallist at the 1996 Paralympic Games, acknowledges the difficulty in combining elite participation and planning even when athletes understand the benefits of doing so. “Most athletes realise it is vital to plan and prepare for life after sport. However it is often very difficult to manage all current demands while trying to plan for the future at the same time” (Athlete Career and Education, 1999).

The consequences of these type of programs, and the willingness of athletes to use the facilities and support provided, is likely to have some bearing
on the level of preparation undertaken by residential athletes prior to their transition. Anderson and Morris (2000), in a review of athlete transition and career/education programs around the world, highlight a number of difficulties associated with athletes deriving benefit from such programs. Lack of adequate funding for programs, organisational and athlete apathy with regard to the need for pre-retirement planning, a reactive rather than proactive approach to dealing with life-skill related issues, and the lack of research on the effectiveness of currently existing programs, are all areas that may influence the effectiveness of a transition program. Easy access to practical and informative support should enable athletes to prepare more effectively for the inevitable transition out of the institutional environment. However, there is also a need to assess whether organisational, social or psychological barriers exist that might hinder the athlete from seeking the information required to make such preparations.

*Impact of the Event*

The final factor to consider when approaching a transition, is the impact of the event on the individual. For an individual undergoing a transition, “it is not the event or non-event that is most important but its impact, that is, the degree to which the transition alters one’s daily life” (Schlossberg, et al., 1995, p.33). The theory predicts that the degree of change results in a corresponding rise in stress, regardless of whether the change is perceived as a positive or negative event. As a consequence of this relationship, the more an event alters
an individual’s life, the more coping resources it requires, and the longer the adaptation process will take. The impact of the event is therefore likely to be reflected in the amount of change required in physical, behavioural, psychological and social characteristics, in order to meet the demands of the new environment and situation.

An issue that is closely linked to the transition out of an elite residential program, is that of relocation. It would be expected that an individual who is required to relocate to a new environment is likely to experience a greater impact than an individual who returns to a familiar environment, such as the family home. Of further consequence, is the disruption of social ties that inevitably accompanies any relocation experience.

Research relating to relocation has provided equivocal results regarding the reactions experienced during the adaptation phase. Levey (2001), in a study of sources of stress for students involved in a medical residency, found that relocation was related to increases in stress, along with other indicators such as career planning, isolation and social problems. Other researchers have found an increase in emotional disturbance, with increased levels of depression reported for individuals who had recently moved (Hendershot, 1989). In contrast, Frasse (2000) found that doctoral students who had relocated to pursue their degree, were no more likely to suffer from depression or increased stress levels in comparison to those students who had not relocated.
A number of factors have been identified which may contribute to the varying level of impact that relocation may have. Plucker and Yecke (1999) studied the effects of relocation on gifted students, and concluded that relocation had little impact on student and parent perceptions of long-term social, emotional and academic development. However, a frequent cause of frustration was the inconsistencies in organisational programs for gifted children, in effect, the varying degrees of facilities, support and quality of programs provided. This frustration may be of particular relevance for athletes involved in elite programs where access to world-class facilities is provided. Relocation following involvement in such a program, may not provide the same opportunities to access the level of facilities and support previously enjoyed.

Another issue that may influence relocation outcomes is the antecedent to the change. A recent study by Eby and Dematteo (2000) found that employees who had relocated for a promotion, perceived higher levels of organisational support and lower levels of dissatisfaction, than those who had relocated as a result of lateral or downward job placements. Although no research exists on this particular aspect, a similar situation for athletes would be a relocation to take up a professional contract, in comparison to a return to a lower grade of competition.

Studies have also indicated that preparation prior to the move, feelings of control over the situation, adequate social support, and quality of the parent/adolescent relationship, can result in a buffering effect against the stress
associated with relocation (Martin, 1999; Moyle & Parkes, 1999; Pittman & Bowen, 1994).

Martin (1999) studied the experiences of 54 individuals who were required to relocate for employment. The results indicated that higher levels of pre-move preparation was related to better post-move mental health and job-related contentment. A larger study by Moyle and Parkes (1999) collected questionnaire data from 175 supermarket employees before their job relocations, and at six week and six monthly intervals following relocation. Regression and path analysis indicated that negative impact associated with the move was buffered by perceptions of control over the situation, and social support.

In relation to adolescent populations and parental support, a large study of 882 adolescents from nine United States Air Force installations located around the world, highlighted the importance of parents as a social support buffer. Regression analysis indicated that “the factor that made the largest unique contribution to the explanation of personal adjustment (to a relocation) was the quality of the adolescent/parent relationship” (p.81). Willingness on the part of the adolescent to use family members as sources of social support, was found to be predictive of greater personal adjustment following relocation.

A somewhat unique influence which needs to be considered with relocation of athletes from an elite institution, is the effect of any changes to routines involving training regimes, sleep patterns, and dietary intake. To date
there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding the short and long term impact of dramatic changes in training regimes. However, some studies have indicated that transition difficulties may be partly related to the effects of physical problems, detraining and deregulation of eating habits (Menkehorst & Van Den Berg, 1997; Wylleman, De Knop, Menkehurst, Theebom, & Annerel, 1993).

In relation to mood state, previous research has indicated that decreases in training volume can lead to greater mood improvement (Crossman, Jamieson, & Henderson, 1987; Fry, Grove, Morton, Zeroni, Gaudieri, & Keast, 1994; Morgan, Brown, Raglin, O’Connor, & Ellickson, 1987; Morgan, Costill, Flynn, Raglin, & O’Connor, 1988; Murphy, Fleck, Dudley, & Callister, 1990). However, there is also some evidence that athletes may experience a negative mood state with reduced training volume and intensity (Wittig, McConnell, Costill, & Schurr, 1992).

Decreases in training volume may also result in a reduction in the amount of slow wave sleep required (Taylor, Rogers, & Driver, 1997). As slow wave sleep is thought to be related to metabolic restoration and body rest (Vander, Sherman, & Luciano, 1990), there may be changes in the duration of sleeping time due to decreases in the physical demands of training (Kubitz, Landers, Petruzzello, & Han, 1996; Youngstedt, O’Connor, & Dishman, 1997). A recent study of 294 university students indicated that sleep patterns can also be affected by mood state, with higher negative mood associated with higher
levels of sleepiness during daytime hours (Girardin, von Gizycki, Zizi, & Nunes, 1998).

In relation to dietary intake, an unbalanced diet may increase the incidence of drowsiness and poor task performance (Spring, Chiodo, & Bowen, 1987), and influence mood states. Keith, O’Keefe, Blessing, and Wilson (1991) using a small sample of female cyclists, concluded that “in some cases a diet that deviates from a subject’s ‘normal’ diet may be perceived somewhat adversely” (p.216).

The changes to routines involving exercise, sleep and diet are important to consider because of the possible impact these factors may have on daily functioning and mood state. An individual’s positive or negative reaction to an event, and their subsequent ability to cope with the adaptation process, are likely to be related to the type of mood state that exists during that period. Changes to important physiological functions, including sleep patterns or dietary habits, may indicate a positive adaptation to reduced demands. However, depending on the severity, length of time symptoms persist, and nature of the changes, they might also be indicators of adaptation difficulties or maladaptive coping strategies.
Summary

The benefit derived from investigating the type, context and impact of the transition event, is a better understanding of the circumstances in which the event has taken place. From this information, a more detailed picture is provided which may help to analyse and understand the different types of reactions that occur during the adaptation process itself, and the pattern of coping strategies used by different individuals.

The various factors present during the approach to the transition process provide an opportunity for multiple scenarios to be generated which have the potential to influence adaptation experiences. However, there may be an opportunity to gain some understanding as to what factors, or combination of factors, are most likely to be associated with negative or positive reactions during the transition process.
Chapter 3

The Transition Process

The next phase in understanding a transitional event, is the process of adaptation that an individual experiences in order to commence a new life organisation. Schlossberg et al. (1995) acknowledges that various theories can be used to analyse the transition process itself. Some of the theories considered by Schlossberg et al. (1995), such as Kubler-Ross’s grief model, focus heavily on the assumption that a transitional event will be marked by negative responses during the adaptation phase. These theories provide limited scope for exploring transitions that involve positive and desired events; nor can they adequately explain positive perceptions and adaptation outcomes to what appear to be negative events, such as injury or career termination. Other theories, such as those proposed by Louis, Ebaugh, van Gennep, and Myerhoff (as cited in Scholssberg et al., 1995), focus only on specific parts of the whole adaptation process, thereby providing an incomplete picture.

In contrast, William Bridges’ (1986) organisational approach to examining transitions provides a more flexible framework within which to analyse the adaptation process, because it takes into account the separation from the previous environment and roles, follows the process until adaptation is
complete, and allows for the possibility that the transition may not be a negative or extremely disruptive experience.

Bridges’ three-stage theory (1980, 1986) proposes that each transition starts with an ending, then moves into a neutral phase, and finishes with a new beginning, as illustrated in Figure 4. Within each phase certain characteristics associated with the adaptation process are displayed.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 4. Bridges’ Three Stage Transition Theory*
The Ending

The initial stage of the theory proposes that in order for an individual to make a transition to a new life organisation, they must first be able to separate themselves from past roles and routines in order to adapt to new demands. This 'Ending' process is the first stage toward adaptation, and is predominantly characterised by disengagement from the pre-transition environment.

Whatever the particulars of the situation, there is a break, an 'unplugging', a separation of the person from the subjective world he or she took for granted. Some people are relatively self-contained to begin with and they may not be so dismayed by this break. But people whose personal security is tied to relationships and feelings of belonging, to status and role, are quite undone by disengagement (Bridges, 1986, p.27).

Linked to the process of disengagement, is the need to reduce or eliminate identification with the pre-transition roles. "One of the first losses in any transition is the sense of one's identity in the former situation...the old identity must go if there is to be space for the new one" (p.28). This process, referred to by Bridges as disidentification, allows the individual to begin
exploring new roles and identities that subsequently allow them to adapt to new situational demands.

For some individuals, the consequences of disengagement and disidentification can be disenchantment, particularly when a change is significant and an individual struggles to find meaning in the event. Feelings of deception and suspicion can begin to evolve regarding the circumstances of the event, and where such feelings are later substantiated, “disenchantment can become an overwhelming experience” (Bridges, 1986, p.28).

*The Neutral Zone*

The second phase of the transition process proposed by Bridges is referred to as the ‘Neutral Zone’. This phase is generally characterised by “an apparently unproductive time-out” (Bridges, 1980, p.114) where the individual is almost suspended in time between the old life and the new life. “During this period, a person is betwixt and between, having left old roles, relationships, routines and assumptions but not yet in a new life with new roles, relationships, routines and assumptions” (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p.40).

Bridges (1986) concedes that there is no clear division between the ending phase of a transition and the neutral phase, but for those who are dealing with the loss of identity, or feelings of disenchantment, this is a time for reflection. Individuals who pass into the neutral zone may be characterised by a feeling of emptiness and uncertainty, with the loss of old roles and identity,
relationships and routines creating a vacuum between the ending of one period in their life and the building of a new one. Some may experience disorientation whilst they find direction between a life organisation that no longer exists, and one that has yet to be created. A feeling of disintegration may also occur. The individual may feel that “everything has fallen apart” (p.29), with the breakdown of old structures helping to create a void that allows previous anxieties or events to be revisited.

Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) referred to the neutral zone as ‘Nowhere Land’ in their recent study. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with seven female gymnasts who were former members of the Canadian National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team, and found that the majority of participants described feelings of disorientation and confusion similar to that represented by Bridges’ neutral zone. The gymnasts who experienced a difficult transition felt out of control because there was no direction to their lives, and they felt uncertain about where to focus their energies. The loss of identity as an elite athlete was also identified as a struggle, as well as a feeling of a void created in their lives. “Three of the respondents described an intense desire to re-create their gymnastics experience. They hoped to devote themselves to another activity that would give them the same sense of satisfaction and fulfillment” (p.123).

Research into retirement issues associated with elite athletes (Baillie 1993) has found that those athletes who perceived retirement as a complete
barrier to their goal, were more likely to exhibit denial, anger, bargaining or depression in response to the event. Similar reactions have been found where athletes have been dropped from sporting teams (Blinde & Stratta, 1992), or where athletes were forced to relocate or retire as a consequence of a sport program being cut (Zaichkowsky, King, & McCarthy, 2000). Kerr and Dacyszyn (2000) found that “those who left sport harboring unresolved conflict, feelings of loss, bitterness, and anger, or who struggled with body image problems, had longer more difficult transitions” (p.125).

In a recent review of 14 studies relating to career transitions in sport (Lavallee, Nesti, Borkoles, Cockerill, & Edge, 2000), the authors presented evidence that athletes who had negative or prolonged transition adjustment often experienced psychological difficulties associated with Bridges theory, including dissatisfaction with self or life, feelings of isolation and loss of identity, feelings paralleled to death and dying, severe emotional problems, reflected negative expressions and experiences, feelings of depression, helplessness, and disengagement problems associated with distress about leaving their sport and retiring.

Wylleman et al. (1993) found that athletes who reported difficulties during the transition process were not only likely to have experienced emotional problems such as disruption of feelings of personal identity, lower levels of self-confidence and feelings of depression, but also physical problems relating to the effect of detraining and deregulation of eating habits. Of the 77 elite
athletes who responded to Menkehorst and Van Den Berg’s (1997) coping questionnaire, 41.6% reported serious mental problems during their retirement transition, and 2% experienced serious physical problems. The issue of psychological disturbance during this period is a significant one, with a number of studies indicating that psychological well-being is the most important factor in contributing to adaptation, with increases in depressive symptomology being present over time where poor adaptation to the transition event occurs (Ungerleider, 1997; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

The final characteristic of the neutral zone is that each individual passes through a stage of discovery as they find new ways to cope with the alterations to identity and structures. This discovery phase ultimately enables the individual to begin the process of redefining a new life organisation. Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) found that the gymnasts in their study underwent a process of ‘reorientation’ prior to the commencement of a new beginning. This process involved “spending some time in retrospection, analysing and deconstructing their sport experiences. For some, this step also involved healing physical and psychological wounds that were the aftermath of their sport careers” (p.123).

Although Bridges’ (1980, 1986) theory proposes that individuals who are undergoing a transition will enter a ‘neutral phase’, little attention has been paid to individuals who appear to disengage from previous roles without distress or re-evaluation. Schlossberg et al. (1995) acknowledges that “not everyone experiencing an ending has to go through these in any prescribed
sequence, however; nor does everyone have to go through all four aspects. Still in one way or another, people do disengage by separating from the old roles and routines” (p.38).

Research has indicated that individuals can vary with regard to how they react to a change in circumstances. Some individuals are able to effectively manage the demands and stress placed upon them by the transition event; but for others who are less resilient, confusion, loneliness, disinterest and depression may be the result (Cutrona, 1982). For others still, the symptoms are similar to that of the mourning process, with expressions of denial, anger, bargaining, and grief being evident (Baillie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Zaichkowsky et al., 2000).

In a review of various aspects of the career transition process in sport retirement, Baillie and Danish (1992) concluded that “many athletes do not face difficulty when they reach the end of their years of sports participation. For some, the time of transition may be brief and unremarkable; others may experience acute distress and difficulty” (p.90). This notion that athletes can experience unremarkable or relatively easy transitions has been supported by more recent research evidence.

In their review of career transition patterns, Lavallee et al. (2000) concluded that only 20.1% of the athletes required considerable adjustment. Similarly, Wylleman et al. (1993) found that 56% of the 117 Flemish Olympic athletes they surveyed had no problems during the transition process, 30% had a
small number of problems, and 14% experienced severe problems. The study by Menkehorst and Van Den Berg (1997) provides even further support, with only 10% of the athletes experiencing serious difficulties coping with the stress of retirement. In contrast, five of the seven elite gymnasts interviewed by Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) described their transitions out of elite sport as very difficult, even though they experienced both positive and negative emotions. All described missing some elements of their sport participation, feelings of loss of control, frustration and disorientation; but also positive reactions as a result of relief from the stress and demands of elite participation.

In light of these findings, the issue when examining the neutral phase of the transition process is not just to understand the more negative consequences of such an event. How long reactions last, and what impact they have on the individual’s ability to adapt to the changes required, may also influence the movement toward Bridges’ (1980) final stage of a new beginning. An unanswered question is whether individuals who adapt easily to a transition, also experience the reflection and discovery processes described by Bridges.

The Beginning

At the ‘Beginning’ stage the individual starts to take on new roles, relationships and routines that allow the adaptation process to continue to its finality. Bridges concludes that the difficulty with commencing a new beginning does not come from “a difficulty with beginnings per se, but from a
difficulty with endings and neutral zones” (1986, p.30). Individuals who continue to look backward, may find it more difficult to acknowledge the new situation and make the necessary adjustments (Paul & Brier, 2001). The new beginning therefore, “must be built upon the orientation and identity that emerge in the neutral zone” (Bridges, 1986, p.31). The process of commencing a new beginning can vary in terms of the length of time it takes for adaptation to occur. However, previous studies have indicated that for athletes who suffer adjustment difficulties, the process can take up to two years or more (Baillie, 1993; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000).

Summary

The evidence to date suggests that the transition process is a sequence of events that allows the individual to leave behind the pre-transition life, and move forward into a new life organisation. The fact that the process experiences differ for individuals and situations, suggests that other factors intervene at that time to either enhance or impede individual progress.

Schlossberg et al. (1995) contends that adaptation experiences are influenced by the resources available at the time of the event, and throughout the transition process. These resources have the capacity to speed up the adaptation process, create buffers against the stress associated with the changes required, and promote adaptive reactions; or they may slow the process down, and promote maladaptive reactions to the transition event. As a consequence,
the reactions experienced during the transition process need to be considered, not only in regard to how the athlete reacted, but also what coping resources were associated with those reactions.
Chapter 4

Potential Resources – The 4 S’s

Situation

The first area from which potential resources can be drawn during the transition process, is from the situation itself. In this instance, situation refers to an individual's perceptions of the nature and meaning of the characteristics of the transition event. Schlossberg (1981) identified six key perceptual areas relating to the situation, as illustrated in Figure 5, namely the nature of the onset of the event, source of the change, the desirability and duration of the event, the resulting role change, and whether an individual has had previous experience with a transition event.

"An individual’s view of who or what is responsible for the transition, affects how that individual appraises the transition (and himself or herself and the environment)” (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p.57). As a consequence, it can be assumed that the nature of the appraisals made by the individual have the potential to influence the transition process itself. It can be suggested that the more positive perceptions an individual has regarding their situation, the more likely those appraisals are to assist an individual with the adjustment process, whereas negative perceptions are more likely to hinder progress.
Figure 5. Perceptions of the situation
Onset of the Transition

Schlossberg (1981) maintains that adaptation to a transition is related to the nature of the onset of the event, that is, whether the transition occurred suddenly or gradually. The suddenness or otherwise of an event, is likely to be linked to the level of preparation an individual is able to engage in, and the type and amount of control the individual feels they have over the change. Gradual transitions are generally considered preferable in that they provide adequate time to plan for the event, and to make alternative decisions regarding future actions; whereas a change that occurs suddenly or unexpectedly prevents such preparation (Baillie, 1993).

A number of studies have indicated that athletes who have experienced a sudden career termination are more likely to experience poorer emotional adjustment, lower life satisfaction, a higher incidence of depression, and can be susceptible to severely adverse reactions such as alcohol abuse, and even suicide (Baillie, 1993; Kleiber et al., 1987; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). In Wylleman’s et al. (1993) study, athletes who experienced a sudden termination to their career found it difficult to adjust to the event because they suddenly had to part with a certain lifestyle and specific social relations.

Most onset related research in sport has focused on the issues of sudden events that lead to career termination or disruption, but sudden events may also include transitions that result from positive events such as offers for
professional contracts, or an exceptional performance. To date there is insufficient empirical evidence to provide an understanding of what impact a sudden event of a positive nature might have on transition perceptions.

Source of the Change

Another influence on perceptions regarding the transition is the source of the event, that is, whether the antecedents to the event were internal or external in nature. Internal relates to a change that was initiated by the individual, whereas an external source results from changes forced upon the individual by other people or circumstances (Schlossberg, 1981).

Schlossberg (1981) contends that an “individual adapts more easily to transitions in which the source is internal” (p.9). Some studies have indicated that voluntary changes to sporting careers are indicative of better emotional and social adjustment, even when the nature of the event is not positive, such as loss of motivation or enjoyment, problems with organisational politics, decrements in performance or financial issues (Alfermann, 2000; Baillie, 1993; Lavallee, Grove & Gordon, 1997). Although it seems reasonable to assume that voluntary changes would be more likely to assist the adjustment process, Taylor and Ogilvie (1998) suggest that ending an athletic career voluntarily does not necessarily ease the transition process.

One relevant factor that may be influencing perceptions about the source of change and adjustment, is whether the athlete felt they had some control over
the decision. Research in the area of career termination indicates that transitions that occur as a result of voluntary actions are more likely to be perceived as having internal and controllable causality, and are therefore associated with less stress and better emotional and social adjustment (Lavallee et al., 1997; Patton & Ryan, 2000; Pearson & Peptitpas, 1990; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994).

In contrast, athletes who experience the greatest adjustment difficulties are likely to be those who perceive the least personal control over the situation, particularly in the areas of injury, illness, de-selection and organisational decisions (Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Lavallee et al., 1997; Werthner & Orlick, 1986; Wylleman et al., 1993). Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) suggest that it may be the absence of control that creates “a situation that is highly aversive and threatening” for the individual (p.8). Even where an athlete makes a voluntary decision to terminate participation at an elite level due to injury or illness, it does not necessarily follow that they would be happy about having to make that decision.

Desirability of the Change

Closely related to the issue of perceived control, is the desirability of the event itself. The desirability of change refers to whether the individual is happy or satisfied that the change in circumstances is appropriate for them, at the time the event occurs. The level of desirability associated with the event is very likely to be a good indicator of the speed with which an individual is prepared,
and able to move past the end stage of the transition process. “Every transition has the potential to be a crisis, a relief, or a combination of both, depending on the individual’s perception of the situation” (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). As such, the desirability of the change is likely to be related to the voluntary or involuntary nature of the event, and the adaptation process.

Swain (1991) conducted in-depth interviews with 10 athletes who had voluntarily retired from their sports, and found that for some athletes the ending of their career was desirable because their career had become a “chronic hassle”, whereas others described it as a “nonevent because they simply moved on to other life activities” (p.157). Some athletes may also experience a sense of relief as a result of increased opportunities to pursue other activities (Greendorfer & Blinde, 1985; Werthner & Orlick, 1986).

In contrast, athletes who are forced into a transition event are more resistant to, and less prepared for the event, than those who undergo the change voluntarily (Crook & Robertson, 1991; McPherson, 1980). Involuntary and undesired changes, particularly forced retirement, are more likely to be associated with denial, anger, depression, lower self-esteem, and dissatisfaction with goal achievement (Baillie, 1993; Crook & Robertson, 1991).

Ungerleider’s (1997) qualitative research into the experiences of 57 Olympic athletes, found that athletes who were forced to retire experienced serious to very serious transition problems because the change was not a desired one. He concluded that the athletes were emotionally, intellectually and
physically unprepared for life after sport because “they had never visualized a life without training and competing. For many it was ‘the only life I knew’, and it was inconceivable to do anything else.” (p.1293).

Duration of the Event

Perceptions of a transition can also be affected by the duration of the transitional event, that is, whether the change is likely to be permanent or temporary. The relative permanence of the situation has the potential to be either a positive or negative influence on the adaptation process, depending on individual circumstances and perceptions. An event that is likely to be short-term will be viewed differently to one that is long term or permanent (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990). “A transition that is painful and unpleasant may be more easily borne if the individual is assured that it is of limited duration... Conversely, if the change is desired, then the certainty that it represents a more or less permanent state may be reassuring” (9).

Research has indicated that uncertainty as to future outcomes is associated with higher levels of stress responses than events that are predictable and certain (Greenberg, 1999; Schlossberg, 1981). Knowledge regarding the probable time frame for the event also appears to empower individuals to engage in the transition process (Glacken, Kernohan, & Coates, 2001).

In terms of understanding a transition relating to a scholarship program, the event is generally a permanent change given that the majority of athletes
will only have one opportunity to access a residential scholarship. However, athletes may be required to leave a residential program prior to the pre-determined cessation date for reasons such as temporary illness or injury, lack of funding, organisational decisions, or age related issues. In these instances, there may be some relationship between the uncertainty of their future sporting career, given that there may be other opportunities to resume their scholarship depending on future outcomes.

**Role Change**

Schlossberg (1981) proposed that many transitions also involve a role change. Role change refers to alterations in psychological, behavioural and/or social characteristics that are required by the individual to adapt to the changing demands of the situation and environment. Not all transitions involve a role change, but when they do, Schlossberg (1981) contends that there is either a role gain or loss. Irrespective of whether the individual experiences a gain or loss, some degree of stress will be associated with the resulting role change.

In terms of understanding the issue of role change in an athletic domain, the concept of athletic identity is likely to have the most relevance. Research has indicated that athletes who are most at risk of experiencing difficulties during a transition are those who have a strong identification with the athletic role (Brewer, Van Raalte & Petitpas, 2000; Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon, 1997; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Ungerleider, 1997). The
difficulties arise because they may become “overly invested with their status and uniqueness as members of an elite, privileged class” (Baillie & Danisch, 1992, p.82). This strong identification with the athlete role may result in inadequate planning for post-athletic careers (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Grove et al., 1997), and increased affective responses to career exploration and decision-making (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Grove et al., 1997, Petitpas & Champagne, 1988; Ungerleider, 1997).

Of similar importance is the role that an athlete has played during their athletic career, that is, whether they obtained a public profile for their achievements, and the role expectations associated with such achievements. Kleiber et al. (1987) proposed that the “quality of performance during the concluding phases of role enactment might well affect one’s sense of well-being and life satisfaction in the periods immediately following that role completion” (p.29).

Research has indicated that a lack of opportunity for successful role completion may result in temporary lower levels of life satisfaction (Baillie, 1993; Kleiber et al., 1987), whereas Sinclair and Orlick (1993) found that athletes who had achieved their sport goals tended to feel more satisfied with life following retirement. Dissatisfaction with role changes may also occur where a loss of publicity or general interest in the athlete’s activities occurs for those who previously experienced a salient public role or profile (Menkehorst & Van Den Berg, 1997).
Previous Experience of a Transition

The final factor, previous transition experiences, relates to any previous historical events that have involved re-organisation and adaptation because of a change in circumstances. Research in different domains has indicated that previous experience with a relocation event is associated with reduced stress following subsequent relocations, and better adjustment to the transition event (Fisher et al., 1986; Martin, 1999; Swain, 1991).

Danish, Owens, Green, and Brunelle (1997) proposed that past experience with a transition is of special importance in understanding the current responses and adaptation to a new transition event. They maintain that when an individual is able to compare a past event or situation with a current event or situation, they will be more prepared to cope with that experience. “At the cognitive level, the individual knows he or she can deal with the event; at a behavioral level, a behavioral sequence employed successfully in the past is available; and at a psychological level, the event is no longer unique and the properties common to previous events are highlighted” (p.158).

This notion is similar to the idea proposed by Martens (1978), who suggested that involvement in competitive sport may act as a form of stress inoculation which stimulates the development of general coping strategies that can be transferable across different events and situations. Practice demands, expectations of success, adulation, transitions to higher levels of competition, coping with injuries, changes associated with coaches or training environments,
and competition related travel, are all early events that may influence an individual’s ability to adapt to a new situation (Danish et al., 1993). Similarly, skills that are acquired in the athletic environment, such as mental skills training and relaxation techniques, may be transferred to the new situation (Danish et al., 1993; Mayocchi & Hanrahan, 2000). Swain (1991) concluded that athletes were better able to adjust to a transition event, such as retirement, because they had frequently adjusted to sudden changes that had occurred during their careers. Although these athletes found the change to be stressful, “several noted that it was not unlike other difficult decisions they had faced” (p.158).

In light of previous findings, it can be anticipated that individuals who are required to make the transition away from a residential institute setting, may be influenced by their original transition experiences into the institute. Their immediate experiences in the residential program, susceptibility to homesickness, strength of social networks and support, and their ability to cope with a unique environment, are all factors that may influence their perceptions about their ability to cope with change during the next transition.

Summary

The research findings presented in this chapter indicate that certain types of events are likely to elicit an expected pattern of perceptual responses to the situation that can either assist or hinder the adaptation process. These
perceptions not only develop as a consequence of the pre-transition experiences and environment, but also as a manifestation of individual characteristics.
Chapter 5

Potential Resources – The 4 S’s

Self

Another potential area from which resources can be drawn, are the characteristics of the individual. These characteristics relate to physiological, psychological, sociological and historical factors that may influence an individual’s reaction to the event, and the nature of the transition process. Every individual will bring a unique combination of personal characteristics to a transition experience, and it is acknowledged that these variables would be interactional in any real life event. However, it is not within the scope of this study to examine the interaction of these personal characteristics. The focus of this study is to examine how each of these factors is related to an individual’s reaction to a transitional event, and whether such factors assisted or hindered the adaptation process.

Schlossberg et al. (1995) contend that “people face transitions, problems and joys with characteristic psychological patterns and resources” (p.67), and therefore individual characteristics need to be considered when attempting to understand the different coping patterns and outcomes which may result from a transitional event.
Figure 6. Potential resources relating to the self
Schlossberg’s original model (1981) identified a number of personal, demographic and psychological variables that appear to be relevant to how individuals cope with transitions. The majority of these variables have been used for the current study, using the life-span and contextualist theories as a structured framework to isolate biological, psychological and sociological variables, as illustrated in Figure 6. A number of additional variables have been included that were deemed to be relevant for adolescent development and elite athlete populations.

**Biological**

The physical and psychological processes that accompany the pubertal changes associated with early adolescence, cannot be discounted as a possible influence where younger athletes are undergoing a transitional event. The physical changes relating to puberty usually lead to an increased focus on issues such as sexuality, body image and peer relationships (Santrock, 1996), but there is also evidence that there is a relationship between pubertal development, mood states and behaviours.

In a review of research evidence pertaining to hormones and adolescent moods and behaviours, Buchanan, Eccles, and Becker (1992) concluded that adolescents “may experience more swings in mood, more intense moods lower or more variable energy levels and more restlessness than people at other points in development”, and “anxiety and self-consciousness may be heightened
(p.98). Some research evidence also indicates a relationship between puberty status and an increased risk of negative effect and depression, particularly for females (Angold, Costello, & Worthman, 1998; Buchanan et al., 1992; Susman, Dorn, & Chrousos, 1991), and increased family conflict (Buchanan et al., 1992; Steinberg, 1981, 1988). However, there is a growing body of research which indicates that emotionality and parent-child conflict may not be as prevalent during the pubertal years as generally believed (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Steinberg, 1990.)

An individual’s physical health status during a transition event also has the potential to contribute to the quality of the adaptation experienced (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). There is ample research evidence to indicate a relationship between stressful life situations and increased risk of health complaints and injuries (Greenberg, 1999; Rotella & Heyman, 1993). A study by Smith, Smoll and Ptacek (1990) found an association between major negative events and incidence of adolescent athletic injuries, but no relation for minor negative events, positive event, or overall life changes. A number of studies have also shown that athletes who suffer a severe career-ending injury may experience decreased life satisfaction in both the short and long term (Brewer 1993; Kleiber & Brock, 1992; Kleiber et al., 1987). However, a recent study by Perna, Ahlgren and Zaichkowsky (1999) found that when race, family socioeconomic status and occupational planning were controlled for, athletes who sustained a
severe athletic injury were no less satisfied with life than non-injured or moderately injured athletes.

A less common, but more serious physical problem that might be present, is that of disordered eating habits. Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia have been identified in athlete populations (Cox, 1998), and symptoms include behavioural, psychological and social indicators. Individuals suffering from eating disorders are more likely to have lower levels of self-esteem, a diminished sense of personal control, distortion of body image, anxiety, mood swings and depression, and exhibit distorted eating and exercise behaviours (Barlow & Durand, 1995).

Kerr and Dacyshyn’s (2000) study indicated that if disordered eating patterns exist prior to a transitional event, then symptoms may persist and prolong the transition process. Two of the seven gymnasts they interviewed struggled with eating disorders prior to their retirement from elite sport. However, their ‘worries about weight did not simply disappear upon retiring, nor did eating disorders. If anything... the preoccupation worsened” (p.125).

Another particularly important issue to consider during a transition in elite sport, is the possibility of burnout being present prior to the event actually occurring. Burnout is a term that is used to describe a state of chronic stress, where the individual withdraws from active participation as a result of failure to cope with accumulated demands (Coakley, 1992; Cox, 1998).
Burnout is often associated with physiological responses such as a lack of appetite, drowsiness, sleep disturbances, increases in basic physiological functions, and increased incidences of somatic complaints (Henschens, 1993). Psychological symptoms can include low-motivation, negative feelings and affect, feelings of isolation, concentration problems, lack of interest or enjoyment, and experiencing highs and lows (Coakley, 1992; Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996). The influence of other individuals is also a factor in athlete burnout, with negative parental and coach influence being indicated as a factor in increased stress levels (Udry et al., 1997).

Given the increased incidence of negative psychological, physiological and social reactions associated with burnout, the presence of such factors prior to a transitional event occurring, may influence the reactions experienced. For some individuals, the transition may signal a relief from the stressors associated with burnout, and therefore may assist in the transition process. However, for other athletes the negative symptomology associated with burnout may exacerbate any negative reactions to the changes required.

_Psychological_

Schlossberg (1981) originally identified a number of psychological constructs that she believed could act as assets or liabilities during adaptation:
• self-attitudes - sense of responsibility, capacity to maintain a coherent and consistent self-image, favorable self-evaluation and internal locus of control;
• world attitudes - optimism and trust; and
• behavioural attitudes - active coping orientation, high initiative, realistic goal setting, substantial planning, forbearance and effort in attainment of goals, enjoying success and suffering failure.

Taking into account Schlossberg’s original theory and the adolescent cohort for this study, the psychological constructs to be addressed in this study include, the level of autonomy exhibited at the time of the transition, the nature and degree of parental involvement and attachment, identity and ego development, self-esteem, achievement motivation, goal orientations, and attributional style. An individual’s emotional stability, whilst being indicative of the impact of the event, should also be considered as an available resource. Finally, cognitive development in the form of problem-solving abilities and familiarity with mental skills, are factors that may influence the level of information processing and mental preparation undertaken in response to the transition event occurring.
Autonomy and Attachment

The period of adolescence is marked by a transformation in relationships that revolve around the issues of attachment and autonomy. Attachment represents a desire to seek proximity to a specific figure, and is a strong affectionate bond between certain individuals that forms a relationship that is enduring and independent of situational circumstances or environmental contingencies (Bowlby, 1982; Rice, 1990). Sroufe and Waters (1977) suggest that attachment is more than this inherent need for protection and survival, but also a bond from which the individual receives security and support to safely explore the environment. Attachment produces behaviours that can differ depending on the level of maturity of the individual and the activating conditions (Rice, 1990), but the meaning of the behaviours remains the same, the goal of security and safety (Sroufe & Waters, 1977).

Newman and Newman (1984) describe autonomy as “the ability to behave independently, to do things on one’s own” (p.528), and Bowlby (1982) suggests that development of such self-reliance is dependent on a number of key issues. An individual needs to be confident that an attachment figure will be available when needed, and confident in the accessibility and responsiveness of those attachment figures. If adolescents are unsatisfied with the support they received in the past, they may view the attachment figures as being inaccessible or incapable of fulfilling their specific needs in the current environment or a specific stressful event (Larose & Boivin, 1997).
Research has indicated that a secure attachment to parents that allows for emotional autonomy during the adolescent years, is generally related to higher levels of self-esteem and self-worth, better emotional well-being and adjustment, a greater sense of mastery over new environments, and higher levels of adolescent ego development (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O’Connor, 1994; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Delaney, 1996; Frank, Pirsch, & Wright, 1990; Grotevant, 1998; Rice, 1990). In contrast, detachment with emotional autonomy can result in decreased feelings of security, understanding and expression of love within the family, and a reduced desire to seek support from parents (Greenberger & McLaughlin, 1998; Ryan & Lynch, 1989).

In relation to developmental transitions, Rice (1990) concluded that the importance of the attachment relationship does change during the developmental years. A “stronger association between attachment and adjustment occurs prior to important developmental transitions”. However:

... once the transition is made, the adolescent may rely on other sources to help him or her adjust. Since multiple attachment figures are possible, the adolescent may at certain times and in certain situations utilize attachment relationships with someone other than parents” (Rice, 1990, p.535).
To date there is insufficient evidence to establish what impact attachment issues have on specific transition events. Nor has any attention been paid to the nature of attachment relationships with adult figures in elite residential settings, particularly where adolescents have been removed from the primary attachment figures of childhood. The nature of these relationships, and the consequences of separation as part of the transition process, may impact on both perceptions and practical issues relating to the event.

Identity Development

The role of identity development during the adolescent and early adult years is fundamentally important for the consolidation and synthesis of childhood identities into a viable construct for adult functioning. The theme of adolescent identity theories is consistently one of integration of various identities to develop a coherent theory of the self, with an emphasis on the role of the physical, cognitive and social development of an individual in the consolidation of a personal identity (Erikson, 1950, 1968; Harter, 1990).

Marcia’s (1991, 1994) concepts of identity achievement and foreclosure are particularly relevant to consider in the context of an elite athletic environment, given the level of commitment required to participate at an elite level, and the possibility of over-identification with the athlete role. Identity achievement results from a successful transition through the crisis period, where an individual has explored options and made an identity commitment in relation
to attitudes, values, beliefs, goals and probable life directions. In contrast, identity foreclosure occurs when an individual makes a commitment to a specific identity and role without adequate exploration of alternatives.

It is possible that an individual can arrive at a positive identity relating to their current role as an athlete, whilst still considering other academic and career opportunities. A transitional event that results in a positive movement toward fulfilling expectations and reinforcement of that role and identity, should not create negative adaptation if the athlete has explored, and is aware of, other alternatives. Berzonsky and Kuk (2000) found that the more students had engaged in self-exploration, the better prepared they were to operate in a mature, autonomous and self-directed manner during the transition into university.

In contrast, foreclosure is said to occur when “an individual bypasses the identity crisis and ends up with what may look like a mature identity from the outside, but falls short of a genuine resolution on the inside because it fails to integrate crucial personality features into a synthesized whole” (Peterson, 1989, p.345). This occurs when adolescents have not had adequate opportunity to explore different roles and ideologies on their own, and may be triggered by parents who hand down commitments to their children, or when premature success occurs in one narrow line of endeavour (Peterson, 1996; Santrock, 1996).
Stevenson (1990) examined the early careers of 29 international athletes and concluded that early success produced valued identities and reputations that were constantly being confirmed by their peers, parents and others. These identities acted to further reinforce the athlete’s decision to continue their commitment to their sport. This commitment and exclusive dedication required to excel in sport may, however, further restrict an athlete’s opportunity to engage in exploratory behaviour necessary for identity achievement (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990).

Danish et al. (1993) proposed that foreclosure may also result from the demands and expectations of the environment. Adolescents who are rewarded for their athletic achievements may choose not to commit to seeking success in other domains because of the time and energy constraints imposed on them by their current environment. In these instances, foreclosure results in an individual’s failure to acknowledge, and adequately prepare for, events that may prevent them from continuing in the role as an elite athlete. Similarly, Brewer et al., (2000) in a review of studies relating to athletic identity and transition experiences, concluded that “failure to explore other vocational identities and prepare adequately for careers outside sport may contribute to the difficulties encountered by individuals strongly invested in the athletes role whose sport careers are ending.” (p.37)

Research evidence to date has indicated that there is a relationship between level of athletic identity and transition adaptation, with high and
exclusive identity associated with greater adjustment difficulties (Brewer et al., 2000). Some results have also indicated that males have a stronger athletic identity than females, that student athletes are more foreclosed than their non-athletic counterparts, and that those individuals in revenue-producing sports are more likely to have higher foreclosure scores than athletes in non-revenue producing sports (Brewer et al., 2000; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). However, in a review of athletic identity studies, Brewer et al. (2000) notes that variations in methodological procedures may have had an influencing role in these findings.

In relation to athletic transition experiences, Ungerleider (1997) found that athletes who had very serious transition problems had difficulty disassociating with the athlete role and associated identity. Similarly, Grove et al. (1997) found that a high athletic identity was associated with greater anxiety about career exploration and decision-making following retirement, and lower levels of pre-retirement planning. In contrast, Adams, Gulotta and Montemayor (1992) indicated that an individual who develops a healthy identity is more flexible and adaptive, and open to changes in society, relationships and in careers.

Although athletic identity has been defined as “the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role” (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993), and is used as a method for gaining some insight into whether foreclosure is likely to have occurred, it should be acknowledged that Murphy
et al. (1996) found that there was no significant relationship between identity foreclosure and athletic identity. Their findings indicated that identity foreclosure and athletic identity were inversely related to career maturity, but they suggested that although both these issues may be relevant to career inhibition and failure to explore alternative roles, they should be treated as separate processes.

_Ego Development_

The issue of ego development is also an important developmental phase of the adolescent period. Santrock (1996) defines adolescent egocentrism as “the heightened self-consciousness of adolescents that is reflected in their belief that others are as interested in them as they themselves are, and in their sense of personal uniqueness” (p.122). Elkind (1967, 1978) proposed that egocentrism manifests itself in two distinct ways during adolescence, namely the imaginary audience and personal fable. The imaginary audience is a consequence of a heightened level of self-consciousness that accompanies an adolescent’s development of abstract thinking. Elkind suggests that in actual or impending social situations, the adolescent believes that he or she will be the focus of everyone else’s attention.

The second distinct aspect of egocentrism is the personal fable, that is, an adolescent’s belief that they are unique, and that no other individual can truly understand them or their experiences.
"While the adolescent fails to differentiate the concerns of his own thoughts from those of others, he at the same time over differentiates his feelings. Perhaps because he believes he is of importance to so many people, the imaginary audience, he comes to regard himself, and particularly his feelings, as something special and unique" (Elkind, 1967, p.1031).

Although no specific research exists on the impact of personal fable and imaginary audience in sport or transition experiences, it must be acknowledged that the feelings and thoughts associated with this heightened sense of self-consciousness and uniqueness, may have the potential to influence how an individual might react to changes in their social and environmental situation. The impact of such thoughts and feelings may even be further heightened given the uniqueness of an elite sport lifestyle.

*Self Esteem*

Self esteem has been defined as the "global evaluative dimension of the self" (Santrock, 1996, p.325), and broadly speaking, is a collective representative of the different domains that indicate what a person likes or dislikes about themselves. Harter (1990) in review of self-esteem literature, concluded that self-esteem improves during childhood, declines in early
adolescence and then begins to improve once again in late adolescence and early adulthood.

There is a great deal of research investigating the self-esteem of athlete and non-athlete populations. Marsh, Perry, Horsley, and Roche (1995) compared the normative data of 2,436 subjects detailed in the Self Description Questionnaire III Manual (Marsh, 1992) with 83 elite athletes at the Australian Institute of Sport, and found that athletes had significantly higher global self-esteem scores than the non-athlete sample.

In relation to the role of self-esteem in transition experiences, Hickman, Bartholomae and McKenry (2000) analysed data collected from 101 college students (17-19 years) using multiple regression, and found that self-esteem was a significant predictor of academic achievement, and social, personal and emotional adjustment to a transition into college. Similarly, a study of the transition experiences of 171 United States army personnel who were leaving the military for civilian occupations, indicated that self-esteem was not negatively affected by the impending transition. The authors concluded that this result was most likely to be due to the confidence instilled in personnel during training and preparation for the event (Gowan, Solesbee-Craft, & Zimmerman, 2000).

There is also some evidence that suggests that high self-esteem is related to more active coping patterns during stressful situations (Seiffge-Krenke, 1990). Frydenberg (1997) concluded that “self-esteem determines the choice of
coping strategies in some respects; the use of strategies in turn helps to shape self-esteem and the self-concept”, and “high self-esteem is in itself a positive coping mechanism” (p.76).

It is likely therefore, that individuals with high global self-esteem perceive a transition to be a more positive experience than those with low self-esteem, due to a greater belief in themselves across differing domains. Detrimental effects on self-esteem may occur, however, if a transition results in a change in environment which is marked by some sharp discontinuity and disturbance to a self-concept domain, or when performance or goal expectations are not achieved.

Self-concept has been defined as the “domain-specific evaluations of the self” (Santrock, 1996, p.325), that is, multidimensional perceptions that a person has about themselves in specific contexts. These perceptions are formed through experience with the environment, and evaluation of accomplishments in relation to some frame of reference in specific domains. They are also influenced by the evaluations of significant others, and reinforcements and attributions made for their own behaviour (Harter, 1990; Marsh, 1992; Shalveson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976).

Elite athletes may be at some risk of developing a uni-dimensional self-concept due to a strong identification with the athletic role, and a failure to develop high self-concepts in other domains such as academia or potential careers. As a consequence, they may exhibit limited perceptions regarding
possible opportunities in the post-transition environment, or beliefs about their ability to master a new situation. The results of Hendershott’s (1989) study into relocation experiences, indicated that social support helps to reduce the negative impact on self-concept during a transitional event, and that a perception of mastery over the new situation is important for maintaining self-concepts in the new environment.

Achievement Motivation and Goal Orientations

Nicholls (1984) defined achievement behavior as “that behavior in which the goal is to develop or demonstrate-to self or to others—high ability, or to avoid demonstrating low ability” (p.328). Research into the role of goal orientation in achievement motivation has found that an individual’s beliefs about how success is achieved, is related to ability orientation (Maehr & Nicholls, 1980; Nicholls, 1984; Nicholls, Cheung, Lauer, & Patashnick, 1989). Ability orientation encompasses the notion that “task mastery is improved by effort or learning...” (Nicholls, 1984, p.329).

“When individuals are task involved, they see more effort as leading to more mastery and higher ability” (Nicholls, 1984, p.332). As a consequence, individuals are likely to derive greater feelings of satisfaction and enjoyment from mastery experiences, exhibit more pro-social and adaptive beliefs, and are less likely to attribute success to external factors (Roberts, Treasure, & Kavussaru, 1996; Treasure & Roberts, 1994; White, 1996).
In contrast, when “individuals are ego involved, their chances of demonstrating ability depend on the ability of others” (Nicholls, 1984, p.333), and a need to establish one’s superiority over others in order to achieve success (Duda & Nicholls, 1992). As a result, these individuals are more likely to exhibit negative social attitudes and maladaptive motivational patterns and beliefs (Treasure & Roberts, 1994; White, 1996), and are less likely to believe that effort was a cause of success (Roberts et al. 1996). A third dimension relates to work avoidance, where the individual believes that success is related to compliant behaviours rather than degree of effort (Duda & Nicholls, 1992; Nicholls, Cobb, Wood, Yackel, & Patashnick, 1990).

Sufficient evidence exists in the academic field regarding the applicability of task and ego orientation (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998), and evidence has also been provided regarding their relevance in sport settings (Duda, 1986, 1989, 1993; Duda & Nicholls, 1992). A study by Duda and Nicholls (1992), using a sample of 207 high school students, concluded that the goal and belief orientations that the participants exhibited were indicative of “theories in the larger sense of world views” (p.297), and that a person’s theory of success may be relevant for understanding their activities in different domains.

Although there is no specific research to date on the relationship between achievement motivation and transition adaptation, it would be expected that those individuals who exhibit an ego-oriented approach to their sporting
participation would have the most difficulty in adjusting to a change away from the elite environment, particularly where any decrease in perceived performance success or social status results. It may also be suggested that those athletes with a task-oriented approach may be more likely to approach a new career or academic pursuit with the same desire to enhance their knowledge and master the environment. Without the need for social reinforcement, they are likely to be better equipped to adapt to the new achievement domain.

Attribution Style

The attribution style of an individual must also be considered during a transitional event because attribution “is used to describe the cognitive process of deciding who or what caused a particular event” (Seamon & Kenrick, 1992, p.590). Attribution theory proposes that an individual strives to explain their own actions in terms of the perceived causes, and that such perceptions will in turn influence a person’s future behaviours and feelings (Heider, 1944, 1958; Weiner, 1985).

There is no research evidence that specifically explains the role of attributions in a transitional event. However, studies into attribution style and academic performance have indicated that high task orientated individuals are more likely to attribute success to intrinsically related motives, interest, effort and co-operation, whereas those high in ego-orientation believe that success is achieved as a result of high ability (Keith, Pottebaum, & Eberhart, 1986;
Walling & Duda, 1995). Attributions relating to effort and ability, are particularly significant when considering the process of adaptation into new environments and roles.

A number of studies have also indicated that attribution style may contribute to affective responses. Mood states have been shown to bias impressions and interpretations of others and events (Forgas & Bower, 1987), and internal attributions generally result in a greater affective response than external attributions (Biddle, 1993; McAuley & Duncan, 1989; Weiner, 1985). Joiner and Wagner (1995), in a meta-analysis of more than 4,000 adults and children, found that a negative attribution style was related to an increased risk of depression.

There is “some support for the assumption that attribution style determines attributions for particular events” (Tiggeman & Crowley, 1993, p.38), and therefore it can be assumed that an individual will need to identify a cause for a life event in order to understand the event, and reconcile the related information. Given the research evidence to date, it may be suggested that an athlete’s attribution style and beliefs about the likelihood of achieving success in other domains, may influence the type of perceptions and reactions they have to that event.
Emotional Stability

An athlete’s affective state at the time of a transitional event is likely to have a significant impact on their adaptive capacity. One of the most important affective states to consider is that of depressed mood. Depressed mood can be defined as feelings of sadness or unhappiness which are transient or temporary in nature; whereas depressive syndromes and disorders are characterised by symptoms that are reasonably consistent, more long term, and are related to other complaints such as somatic symptoms (Barlow & Durand, 1995; Petersen, Compas, Brooks-Gunn, Stemmler, Ey, & Grant, 1993). Petersen et al. (1993) reviewed 30 studies which used non-clinical adolescents as participants, and concluded that 20% to 30% of adolescent boys, and 25% to 40% of girls, reported having a depressed mood, with a further 3% to 7% experiencing a bout of clinical depression.

In an athletic context, many of the psychological symptoms of burnout are affective in nature, with symptomology being characterised by irritability, anxiety, anger/hostility, confusion, emotional and motivational imbalance, and depression (Henschen, 1993; Gould et al., 1996). Similarly, predictable and maladaptive psychological responses to an injury or illness, which may terminate or hamper a career, are likely to negatively impact on affective state (Rotella & Heyman, 1993). Finally, research has indicated that strong identification with the athlete role can increase the risk of the depression following any identity-disrupting event (Brewer, 1993).
Increases in negative cognitions, and an unsupportive family environment, have been shown to increase the likelihood of depression during developmental transitions. Ostrander, Weinfurt, and Nay (1998) investigated the relationship between emotional stability and family relationships and depression, in a study involving 102 children and adolescents (7-18 years) from outpatient and school-based samples. Hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated a significant three-way interaction between negative cognitions, family supportiveness and depression. In particular, lower levels of family support was predictive of higher levels of depression for those late adolescents who rated high in negative cognitions.

The type of affective states experienced may also be important in considering the type of coping strategies used during a transition. Seiffge-Krenke (1995), in a study involving 353 adolescents, found that individuals who were emotionally unstable and depressed perceived minor stressors as significantly more stressful than adolescents who were classified as sociable/extraverted or unexceptional/self-controlled individuals. They were also two to three times more likely to engage in withdrawal strategies in comparison to emotionally stable individuals. Further, the consequences of poorer emotional stability was evident in relation to cognitions and relationships, with the author commenting that these “adolescents perceive themselves as very depressed and less satisfied with themselves and the world,
as less efficient in their achievements and more strained in their relationships with parents and peers" (p.142).

*Cognitive Development*

The research and theoretical perspectives relating to cognitive development are diverse and complex, but the "emphasis on adolescence as a transitional period in cognitive development remains justifiably influential" (Keating, 1990, p.59). The adolescent stage of development is represented by an ability to move beyond purely concrete experiences, and to think in more abstract and logical terms. One consequence of this cognitive development is the ability to generate ideas and evaluate a large number of choices.

By middle adolescence, reasoning becomes more complex, and individuals are able to engage in decision-making processes similar to those found in adults (Flavell, Miller, & Miller, 1993; Keating, 1990). Although no specific research exists relating to stage of cognitive development and transition experiences, it can be suggested that an individual’s problem-solving and decision-making ability is certainly of some consequence given the evidence that exists regarding the influence of complex expectations about a transition, and the role of planning and hypothetical thinking in preparation for the event.

Another aspect of cognitive functioning is the awareness and use of mental skills. It has been suggested that mental skills acquired in the sport environment can be extremely beneficial due to their applicability to other life
pursuits, and their usefulness in transitional or stressful events (Danish et al., 1993; Park, 2000; Mayocchi & Hanrahan, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Weinberg & Williams, 1993).

A study of 124 elite Australian athletes indicated that 97% of the respondents felt that they had learned skills that would be useful in other careers (Hawkins & Blann, 1996). Similarly, Sinclair and Orlick (1993) found that of the 199 retired elite athletes in their sample, 49% continued to use mental skills from one to three hours per week to prepare for their new focus or interest, and 18% spent four to six hours per week. Goal setting, planning and preparation, and imaging of successful performance in the new environment, were the most commonly used strategies. The authors concluded that the successful transfer of mental-training skills may have been a factor influencing the relative smoothness of the transitional event experienced by the athletes in their study.

**Sociological**

Another factor to consider is the adolescent’s perceived resources in relation to the nature of family relationships, and the social, economic, and cultural influences in their pre and post transition lives.

**Family Relationships**

The family unit plays an important role in the development and socialisation of the individual (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985, 1986). Parents
directly influence the formation of their child’s attitudes with respect to self-worth, personal competency and intrinsically motivated behaviour (Harter, 1978, 1981), and play a crucial role in modeling behaviours and identity development (Grotevant, 1998; Santrock, 1996).

Despite common misconceptions that adolescence is a time of great disruption and conflict in the family (Grotevant, 1998; Harter, 1990), studies of family relationships consistently show that adolescents have high regard for their parents. Positive emotional expression, openness to communication, but firm guidelines for behavior and a teaching orientation are associated both with continuing positive relationships between parents and adolescents, and with adolescents’ competence and adaptivity” (Collins, 1995, p.128).

Research to date has consistently shown that characteristics associated with a love-orientated, authoritative parenting style are the most advantageous for psychological well-being, ego development, achievement outcomes and effective communication and socialisation practices (Baumrind, 1971, 1991; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Gfellner, 1986; Hein & Lewko, 1994; Marjoribanks, 1996; Pardeck & Pardeck, 1990; Shucksmith, Hendry, & Glendinning, 1995; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

Adolescents who come from homes characterized as authoritative are better adjusted and more competent; confident about their abilities, competent in areas of achievement, and are less likely than their peers to get into trouble (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991), with these patterns being
maintained or increased over time (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994).

In contrast, parental styles and family environments that are characterised by controlling behaviour, rejection and low levels of affection, are associated with poorer self-esteem, lower self-efficacy, self-confidence and autonomy, a diminished sense of self control, and higher levels of depression and anxiety (Barber, 1996; Baron & MacGillivray, 1989; Conger, Conger, & Scaramello, 1997; McFarlane, Bellisimo, & Norman, 1995a; Oliver & Paull, 1995; Rapee, 1997; Steinberg et al., 1994).

Recent research has indicated that adolescents who have parents who exhibit behaviours and emotional responses indicative of an authoritative parenting style, will have higher levels of well-being and better adjustment in response to a transitional event (Hickman et al., 2000; Wintre & Sugar, 2000; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). Pittman and Bowen’s (1994) study on the impact of relocation on 882 adolescents in the United States Air Force, found that the “factor that made the largest unique contribution to the explanation of personal adjustment was the quality of the adolescent/parent relationship” (p.81).

Parental values and expectations may also create an emotional climate for the athlete during a transition, with high parental pressure and expectations likely to be associated with negative athlete responses and outcomes (Cohen, 1990; Hellstedt, 1990; Udry et al., 1997).
The level and nature of parental involvement prior to a child entering a residential program, and the level of involvement maintained during separation, may also have an impact on the choices that an athlete makes when approaching a transitional event. Hellstedt (1987) proposed that parental involvement in athletic activities falls along a continuum from underinvolved, moderate to overinvolved. "Underinvolved refers to a relative lack of emotional, financial, or functional investment on the part of parents", whereas parents who had moderate levels of involvement are "characterized by firm parental direction, but with enough flexibility so that the young athlete is allowed significant involvement in decision-making. Parents are supportive, but ultimate decisions about participation and levels of achievement are made by the athlete" (p.153). In contrast, the overinvolved parents "have an excessive amount of involvement in the athletic success of their children. They have a need that is satisfied through their children's participation, or they have a hidden agenda, hoping the children's success will provide later opportunities in education or career" (p.154).

Research data indicates that the level and type of parental involvement may have consequences for athlete outcomes. A study by Zaichkowsky et al., (1997) involving 80 university athletes, found a moderate relationship between parental guidance, support and involvement and adaptation to a transitional event, with most low distressed athletes reporting that their parents were involved but not intrusive.
The relationship with siblings in the family unit cannot be excluded as a potential influence in a transition that involves relocation back to the family home. Brothers and sisters compare themselves to each other as they seek to explore and develop their own identities (Bank & Kahn, 1997), and provide each other with emotional support and rivalry (Santrock, 1995). It has also been reported that birth order can have an impact on sibling relationships because older children may perceive preferential treatment of younger siblings by parents (Buhrmester & Fuhrman, 1990; Cote, 1999; Minnett, Vandell, & Santrock, 1983). However, other researchers have argued that birth order itself shows limited ability to predict adolescent behavior (Daniels, Dunn, Furstenberg, & Plomin, 1985; Santrock, 1996).

The perception of inequitable relationships amongst siblings is of some consequence when considering the issues of sibling rivalry, and a talented child within the family unit. Parents who perceive their child as talented or gifted, may report stronger feelings of pride in their gifted child in comparison to their non-gifted child/ren (Cornell, 1983), and siblings may perceive preferential treatment or struggle for recognition (Colangalo & Brower, 1987; Leung & Robson, 1991; Yewchuck & Schlosser, 1996).

Having a talented child in the family unit also has the potential to influence the dynamics of the family relationship as a consequence of the unique demands or needs of that individual. Hackney (1981) indicated that the presence of a gifted child in the family can become a stressful event because of
the need to alter normal family roles to accommodate the special needs of the talented child. When this occurs, problems may arise because the gifted child’s wants and needs can become the focal point around which family life revolves, and the extra time required to support the talented child, may limit the time available for partners and other siblings (Rimm, 1991; Keirouz, 1990). This inequitable distribution of time has the potential to become even more evident when a talented athlete returns to the family home after a long absence. West, Hosie, and Mathews (1989), however, concluded that having a gifted child in the home was not necessarily associated with extreme patterns of family functioning, provided that families were able to exhibit adaptability and/or cohesion.

Demographics

To date there is no clear evidence of significant differences in overall transition experiences due to gender, ethnicity or cultural differences, although a number of differences have been found on individual variables, within specific samples (Lavallee & Wylleman, 2000). The wide array of measurements and theoretical frameworks used, the varying focuses for each of the studies, differences in samples, and lack of studies that covered all aspects of the transition event, precludes the researcher from making concrete assumptions as to whether transition difficulties are more likely to occur for one specific gender, race or culture.
An individual’s family history, in terms of socioeconomic status and place of residence, may have the potential to influence individual decision-making at the time of a transitional event. Family financial difficulties resulting from unemployment, poverty or low socioeconomic status limit the resources available to a talented athlete. Parents are often required to invest large amounts of time and money into a talented child’s pursuits (Weiss & Hayashi, 1995), and committed families often sacrifice their own personal and social needs to find the financial resources necessary for elite participation (Cote, 1999). These financial sacrifices may create a perceived indebtedness on the part of the talented child (Coakley, 1992; Scanlan et al., 1991).

The impact of socioeconomic status may, therefore, influence an athlete’s perceptions and choice of social setting following a residential program by influencing the financial and accommodation resources available through the family unit, and the financial capability to continue in their sport following cessation of government funding. Similarly, feelings of indebtedness where sporting goals have not been met during the residential scholarship, may increase the risk of a negative transition reaction.

A final issue for consideration is the nature of the social setting in which the athlete resided prior to attending a residential program. Although no specific research exists in relation to residential ‘homecomings’ and athletic status, it may be that perceptions of a transition will be related to a rural or urban upbringing, given that a talented athlete from a rural town is more likely to be
personally identifiable by other members of that community than those in large urban centers. Further, the cultural importance placed on sport performance generally, and achievements in high profile sports, or sports popular within certain demographic areas, may place added pressure and notoriety. This may have social and emotional implications for an athlete who may wish to return to the family home, particularly if expectations or goals have not been satisfied.

Summary

The review of individual characteristics as it relates to transition experiences, indicates a number of areas where biological, psychological and social variables overlap. In any real-life event it would be assumed that these variables would interact, but it is not within the scope of this literature review to examine such interactions. What the review does indicate is that there are a multitude of individual traits and social circumstances that have the potential to assist or hinder the adaptation process. Similarly, a number of these characteristics are inherently related to the final two areas of resources that Schlossberg refers to in her model, namely social support and individual coping strategies.
Chapter 6

Potential Resources – The 4 S’s

Support

The third area for consideration in the 4 S’s framework, is the type and amount of emotional, social, financial, informational and practical support available during the transition process. Cohen and Wills (1985) described the importance of support systems as stress buffering mechanisms that “intervene between the stressful event (or expectation of that event) and a stress reaction, by attenuating or preventing a stress appraisal response.” (p.312). They further contend that:

...adequate support may intervene between the experience of stress and the onset of the pathological outcome by reducing or eliminating the stress reaction or by directly influencing physiological processes. Support may alleviate the impact of stress appraisal by providing a solution to the problem, by reducing the perceived importance of the problem, by tranquilizing the neuroendocrine system so that people are less reactive to perceived stress, or by facilitating healthful behaviors (p.312).
Substantial research evidence exists of the role of social support in mediating stress reactions (Greenberg, 1999), and better adjustment to a career transition or a new environment (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999; Lavallee, 2000; Moyle & Parkes, 1999). Effective strategies include emotional support; financial support either through the provision of monetary payments, accommodation, equipment or other assets; informational support in the form of technical, social or practical information which assists with understanding the situation or decision-making processes; and finally instrumental support in the form of financial assistance, material resources, required services, and educational, sport or work related opportunities (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Greenberg, 1999; Gowan et al., 2000; Hawkins & Blann, 1996; Moyle & Parkes, 1999; Pratt et al., 2000).

The usefulness of social support as a coping strategy is also of primary importance given its role in buffering stress reactions (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Greenberg, 1999). Social support and information provided by family, friends and significant others, has been shown to be an important factor in the use of adaptive coping responses, and positive emotional adjustment (Compas, 1987; Holahan, Valintiner, & Moos, 1995; Rowlinson & Felner, 1988; Ryska, 1993; Shulman, 1993; Vaillintiner, Holahan, & Moos, 1994).

In Schlossberg's et al. (1995) model there are two primary areas from which an individual can derive support, namely internal and external support networks, as illustrated in Figure 7.
Figure 7. Social support networks
Internal support refers to any assistance provided by people who have a close relationship to the individual. Support is provided by “people you can really talk to, to whom you feel close, and with whom you share your joys, problems, apprehensions, and love” (Greenberg, 1999, p.106).

External support refers to assistance provided by organisations or agencies that are part of the pre or post transition environments. It is assistance provided by individuals or organisations that do not have the same emotional or social ties that are associated with internal sources of support.

**Internal Support**

A number of studies have indicated the important role of spouses/partners, family members, and friends in providing emotional and instrumental support during transitional experiences (Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Udry et al., 1997; Ungerleider, 1997; Wylleman et al., 1993). A positive and supportive relationship with parents has been associated with a buffering effect against negative events by positively moderating the relationship between a stressor and the subsequent stress reactions (Cohen & Wills, 1985; VanYperen, 1995).

In relation to internal support and transition experiences, Wintre and Sugar (2000) investigated the adjustment of students entering college, and found that involving parents in the transition process was more beneficial than having a student work through the transition alone. Similarly, Pratt et al. (2000)
found that university students who were provided with social support to facilitate the transition into university, scored higher on adjustment indicators, and exhibited less anti-social behaviour and depression. These results supported earlier research which found that social self-efficacy and social support from family and peers was associated with lower levels of depression, and acted as protective factors, following exposure to stressors during a transition event (Holahan, et al., 1995; McFarlane, Bellissimo, & Norman 1995b; Pittman & Bowen, 1994).

Evidence has been provided that athletes who have no difficulties, or only minor problems in adjusting to a transition, are more likely to have sought assistance from a parent, significant other, or coach (Wylleman et al., 1993). In contrast, those with serious problems were more likely to seek help from a mentor or professional consultant (Ungerleider, 1997). Wylleman, De Knop, Ewing, and Cumming (2000), in a review of youth transitions in sport, highlighted the important role of parental support, particularly emotional support, during transitional events and career development. Hawkins and Blann (1996) found that athletes believed that significant others, spouses and/or families should be involved in helping athletes make the transition into new careers.

Although numerous examples exist relating to the benefit of seeking social support, there is also some evidence that support may not be fully used by athletes during a transitional event. Individuals who are less satisfied with
the family environment may be less inclined to seek social support from family members as a coping strategy (McCaughey-Ohanessian, Lerner, Lerner, & Von Eye, 1994). Similarly, Swain (1991) reported that the athletes in their sample frequently felt alienated from non-athletes, from each other, and from loved ones, and as such failed to use these social support systems in the early stages of their transition.

The nature of the personal investment by family members in the athlete's pursuits, may also be a factor that can interfere with the type of internal support available at the time of the transition.

Family members who have enjoyed participation in and identification with the fame and prestige associated with the athlete may not support the athlete's decision to retire....Forced to deal with their own sense of loss, family members are often unable to meet the retired athlete's need for support and understanding.

(Crook & Robertson, 1991, p.120)

Adolescents may also rely on attachment figures other than parents or peers during a stressful or transitional event (Rice, 1990). Although Sinclair and Orlick (1993) found that coaches provided little if any support to most retiring
athletes, coaches or house parents in a residential setting may have a different role to play in the social support of adolescent athletes.

External Support

The notion of institutional obligations to individuals participating in an elite program, is of significant importance in terms of understanding adaptation to a transition event. Thomas and Ermler (1988) maintain that moral obligations of athletic establishments, as they relate to individuals moving in and out of the system, can be defined by two assumptions. Firstly, that “by virtue of power, an obligation exists that should protect the individual autonomy of the athlete, who is in a dependent position”, and secondly that “the legitimate and moral outcome of athletics should be the success of the people in the program rather than the success of the program” (p.143).

Pre-transition planning by organisations has been shown to significantly influence the adaptation to changes in career paths and sport retirement (Gowan et al., 2000; Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). Hawkins and Blann (1996) found that athletes who attended the AIS and the Victorian Institute of Sport demonstrated high levels of career awareness due to the career education programs provided by these institutions. As a consequence of these programs, athletes became more aware of their own responsibilities in terms of future career planning, and believed that the available programs would assist with their future career paths.
In contrast, other studies have indicated that athletes generally perceive a lack of support from institutional groups during transition periods (Jackson, Dover, & Mayocchi, 1998; Menkehorst & Van Den Berg, 1997; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Wylleman et al. (1993) reported that almost half of the athletes in their study believed that lack of support by sporting federations and organisations had the most influence in negative adaptation and social integration following career termination.

A further issue to consider when examining the role of organisations in a transitional event, is to what extent athletes avail themselves of external support when it is provided, and at what stage external support should be withdrawn after the athlete has left the organisation. Hawkins and Blann (1996) found that athletes considered themselves to be primarily responsible for ensuring that transition programs were utilised, followed by help from coaches and sport administrators, and that career transition programs needed to be available during and after their playing careers. However, Sinclair and Hackfort (2000), following a review of the role of sport organisations in career transitions, concluded that “transition programs must ensure that they provide services based on athlete needs rather than on athlete wants – a distinction that may often be overlooked” (p.140).
Summary

Support networks should be considered, not only in terms of close personal relationships, peer networks, and career or study opportunities, but also with regard to the availability of counselling services and information for assisting athletes, and their families, during the adaptation process. The interruption of close relationships with Institute peers or staff members as a result of relocation, a breakdown of social ties in the home environment, or the need to develop new social networks in a unique environment, all have the potential to influence the level of social support available to an individual. Similarly, there is also a need to understand the degree to which social support is used as a coping strategy to adapt to changes in circumstances, and any potential barriers that may inhibit an athlete from seeking either internal or external social support where it is available.
Chapter 7

Potential Resources – The 4 S’S

Strategies

The final area from which resources can be made available to the individual is that of personal coping strategies. These strategies refer to thoughts, actions and impulses that are generated by an individual in response to the stress associated with a change in circumstances (Lazarus, 1996). Assessment is based upon an analysis of the type of coping strategies used by the individual in response to the situation, and the effectiveness of those strategies in assisting the individual with adjustment to the transition process. Of equal importance is the relationship between an individual’s experiences, and coping strategies that were not used or available during the adaptation phase.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) 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.141). The term coping “is used whether the process is adaptive or non-adaptive, successful or unsuccessful, consolidated or fluid and unstable” (Lazarus, 1993, p.237). Lazarus (1993) contends that “there may be no universally good or bad coping
processes, though some might more often be better or worse than others.”
(p.235).

The research to date has focused primarily on understanding coping processes using global descriptions, with the most commonly used global styles described as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping refers to cognitive or behavioural actions that attempt to resolve the stressor by acting on the environment or oneself.

If a person has been harmed, coping is aimed at undoing or repairing the harm, keeping it from being made worse, or preventing it from happening again. If a person has been threatened rather than harmed, coping is focused on preventing the harm that might ensue. And when challenged, a person tries to do whatever is needed to actualize the goals being challenged by efforts to overcome the obstacle.
(Lazarus, 1996, p.291)

In contrast, emotion-focused coping refers to strategies that change the way the stressful relationship with the environment is attended to, or the relational meaning of what is happening, even though the actual conditions of the stressor may not have changed. The “coping actions (which also include thoughts) are directed at the emotions themselves rather than the troubled
person-environment relationship that aroused them... Transforming or regulating our emotions is required, in part, because the emotion, and the information it provides about oneself, may be threatening” (Lazarus, 1996, p.291).

Similar patterns of coping have been identified by other researchers, but have been classified as avoidant or approach strategies. With avoidant strategies the individual attempts to avoid the stressor by distracting themselves from the situation, whereas approach strategies require an effort to address the stressor (Kavsek & Seifge-Krenke, 1996).

Lazarus (1993) contends that people use most of the identified coping strategies in every stressful encounter, that some coping strategies are more stable and consistent across different stressful events than others, and that coping choices may be related to social context and/or personality variables. Lazarus (1996) also contends that any thought or action can serve either a problem-focused or emotion-focused function, and frequently both functions, and that when an action fails to help, the individual will shift to some other strategy in a search for the best way to deal with what is happening. “In effect, coping involves a flux of many strategies, all functionally related to one another, the changing circumstances, and to the general goals and situational intentions of the person who is coping” (p.294). As a consequence, individuals are more likely to exhibit a combination of coping strategies rather than one

Research in the area of coping has generally focused on using global styles to determine relationships or differences in coping styles and adaptation to a stressful event. However, a number of researchers have attempted to categorise coping strategies into more individualistic styles, taking into account the way in which the stressor is attended to (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Patterson & McCubbin, 1997). These coping measurements group strategies together based upon the function of the actions or thoughts exhibited, including such categories as developing social support, venting emotions, seeking diversions, avoiding problems, developing self-reliance, use of humour, and relaxation.

A substantial amount of research evidence exists regarding coping strategies associated with various developmental periods, contextual situations, and gender related differences. It is generally accepted that coping strategies change with age, but studies have differed in the type of patterns exhibited (Frydenberg, 1997). Some studies have indicated that during late adolescence and adulthood higher levels of problem-focused and active coping strategies are utilised (Labouvie-Vief, Hakim-Larson, & Hobart, 1987; Ebata & Moos, 1994; Vercruysse & Chandler, 1992). However, research reviews have also highlighted evidence that higher levels of emotion-focused and cognitive strategies during adolescence may be present (Frydenberg, 1997; Knapp, Stark,
Kurkjian, & Spirito, 1991), or that no differences may be apparent (Sieffge-Krenke, 1990).

A large cross-cultural study of 4,367 adolescents (Gibson-Cline et al., 1996) investigated general trends in adolescent coping strategies. The results indicated that individual problem solving was the single most frequently used coping strategy. Seeking assistance from helpers who would provide information or social support was the next most common strategy. The mother was the preferred family member for social support, but personal friends the preferred choice overall. Disengagement and antisocial behaviour were the least used strategies, and very little professional help was sought even where such help was readily available.

Coping processes must also be considered in the context in which they occur because appraisal and coping strategies may change in different situations (Sellers, 1995). Different methods may be more suitable given the nature of the stressor, the resources of the individual, or the situational context in which the stressful event occurs (Kavsek & Seiffge-Krenke, 1996). Leana & Feldman (1992, 1994) found that individuals who had experienced an unanticipated event such as a job loss, tended to use coping mechanisms such as blaming others and distancing oneself from the situation. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) found that coping strategies most favoured by retiring athletes were to focus their energy and attention on a new interest, keep busy, talk to someone
who would listen to them, and training and exercise. The least preferred coping strategies were counseling, ignoring the difficulties, and use of drugs or alcohol.

Similar findings were reported for retiring elite Australian athletes (Grove et al., 1997) with cognitive strategies, active coping, planning, and social support being the preferred strategies, and religion, alcohol/drug use, and denial, the least preferred. However, those athletes with a strong and exclusive athletic identity were most likely to engage in denial, and have higher levels of mental and behavioural disengagement, venting of emotions and need for social support following retirement. Experiences of short-term denial, angry outbursts, depression and abuse of drugs and/or alcohol have also been reported (Ogilvie & Howe, 1982). Menkehorst and Van Den Berg (1997) found that athletes who relied solely on emotion-regulated coping behaviours during the retirement process, experienced the most negative outcomes, with 20% of the athletes reporting longer lasting psycho-somatic complaints.

A more recent study by Park (2000) involving 148 elite athletes from 41 different sports, indicated that psychological training, physical training, somatic relaxation, hobby activities, social support, prayer, and substance abuse were the most commonly used coping strategies. Other studies with athletes have shown a preference for increased effort, acceptance, planning, active coping, and seeking of social support, with denial and disengagement the least favoured (Grove et al., 1997; Kolt, Kirkby, & Linder, 1995; Madden, Kirkby, & McDonald, 1989).
In a completely different transition context, an investigation of the transition experiences of 18 Australian Olympic gold medallists indicated that 56% of the athletes sought social support (partner, coach, family member or friend), 50% engaged in cognitive restructuring, and 39% ignored or blacked things out, took actions to improve the situation, or developed personal strength. Only 11% of the athletes resorted to maladaptive coping strategies (Jackson, Mayocchi, & Dover, 1998).

In relation to gender differences, Patterson and McCubbin (1987) studied the coping strategies of 426 adolescents, and found that the ranking of coping strategies was very similar for adolescent males and females, with relaxing being the most important form of coping strategy, and the least favoured was seeking professional support. After relaxation, males preferred being humorous, developing self reliance, investing in close friends, seeking spiritual support, engaging in a demanding activity, seeking diversions, developing social support, ventilating feelings, solving family problems and avoiding problems. For females, a slightly different pattern emerged with much more emphasis on social networks. After relaxation, females preferred developing social support, investing in close friends, developing self-reliance, being humorous, seeking spiritual support, engaging in a demanding activity, solving family problems, seeking diversions, ventilating feelings and avoiding problems.
Similarly, Frydenberg and Lewis (1991) using a sample of 643 Australian adolescents, found that females tended to seek social support, daydream and use wishful thinking as ways of coping, whereas males tended to more aggressive and private in their coping approach.

Summary

Understanding the nature of an individual’s coping style may assist in assessing an athlete’s vulnerability or preparedness for a move away from a residential program. Lavallee (2000) concluded that “the overall quality of adjustment to athletic career transition is influenced by the amount of coping resources available to athletes upon retirement from competitive sport” (p.19), a viewpoint shared by authors investigating non-sport related transitions (Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg et al., 1995). As a consequence, identification of relationships between adaptive and non-adaptive coping styles and transition process outcomes, may enable identification of at risk athletes prior to disengagement from an institutional program, and provide an opportunity to teach appropriate coping strategies for transition experiences.
Chapter 8

Research Paradigms

The authors of an Australian study into the experiences of retiring athletes (Grove et al., 1997), highlighted the limitations associated with the use of singular methods of data collection. In their concluding remarks they stated:

In sum, we believe there is a need for a multi-method approach to research in this area in order to achieve a better understanding of the retirement process, provide a solid empirical foundation for the development of career transition programs, and help practitioners to advise athletes about effective ways of coping with the stress of retirement from sport. (p.200)

As previously noted, transition research has generally been conducted on a quantitative basis measuring specific variables relating to adjustment, or qualitative analysis of athlete descriptions of transition experiences. One of the main objectives of this study therefore, is to analyse a transitional event using a multi-method approach, both in terms of a research paradigms and methodological tools.
The Contextual Constructionism Paradigm

The influence of a research paradigm is important for understanding the nature of information collection and analysis in a non-experimental study. Guba and Lincoln (1994) claim that:

...both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm. Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways (p.105).

The constructionist paradigm is perhaps the most compatible of the methodological paradigms for this type of study, particularly given its close connection to the contextualist perspective. This particular paradigm requires the researcher to interpret or find the meaning of a participant’s words and phrases, and to examine opinions or ideas logically to determine their validity. Within the constructionist approach, the enquirer acts “as orchestrator and facilitator of the inquiry process” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.114). This approach allows for the direction of the knowledge to be influenced, not only by the values of the participants, but also the value system and beliefs of the enquirer. The aim of enquiry is understanding and reconstruction of the individual constructions of reality that people hold, aiming towards consensus, but still open to new interpretations as information improves (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).
A further extension of the constructionist paradigm is contextual constructionism, whereby the researcher is not constrained by a scientific realist framework where an assumption of one reality is suggested through the use of 'correct' methodology (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000). The role of the researcher is an interactive one, whereby the inevitability of the influence of one's own cultural and personal constructions on the research process is embraced, rather than an emphasis on objectivity and distancing of oneself during the research process.

With respect to theoretical and methodological approaches, contextualism emphasizes the 'event' both as history and the situation in which it has occurred, thereby allowing the researcher to explore the actions of individuals involved in the context of that specific situation. "By implication, all accounts, whether those of participants or of researchers, are understood to be imbued with subjectivity and therefore not prima facie invalidated by conflicting with alternative perspectives" (Madill et al., 2000, p.9).

Although contextualism does not ignore the possibility of causal events that might become evident through the scientific realist approach, the emphasis is on the use of multiple theoretical and methodological approaches to deal with the complexity of human behaviour (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988). As a consequence, the concept of contextual triangulation lends itself to the use of such multiple methods as a means of investigating a particular event.

*Contextual Triangulation*

Triangulation refers to a methodological approach where the researcher selects a range of methods, investigators and/or theories to broaden the enquiry process (Brannen, 1992). The original formulation of triangulation was based
on an integrative approach, directed toward the use of multiple strategies as a way of validating the conclusions drawn from analysis acquired through the different methods (Denzin, 1970).

The assumption that different data sets will provide confirmation or validation of the other, has been criticised given that both quantitative and qualitative approaches have strengths and weaknesses which are not necessarily complimentary. Similarly, there is some question as to whether the two approaches are actually tapping into the same issues even when the enquiry process is directed toward this goal (Tindall, 1994; Bryman, 1992). As a consequence, the use of triangulation needs to be understood in the context of the aim and nature of the research question.

Method triangulation refers to the use of different methods to collect information (Tindall, 1994). This form of triangulation can involve the use of standard quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as the incorporation of other information from sources such as organisation documentation and media sources. The goal of the multi-method approach is to broaden the information base from which to gain a better understanding of the event. However, ‘we must remember that we are not gaining the impossible, a complete picture: we may in the final analysis be made more aware of gaps in our understanding” (Tindall, 1994, p.147).

From a contextualist perspective therefore, the goal of triangulation is completeness not convergence (Madill et al., 2000); not necessarily in the sense of having discovered all possible information relevant to the event, but a more complete approach which allows for the interpretation of data that is both consensual and conflicting. “Thus a particular strength of the contextualist approach to triangulation is the possibility of retaining truly novel perspectives
which may have been discounted when consensus (and hence probably conventional) understandings are valued” (Madill et al., 2000, p.10).

A Non-Hypothetical Approach

Given the nature of the contextual constructionism perspective, the purpose of this study is not to approach the collection and analysis of the data with a preconceived expectation of the results, that is, hypotheses to be validated or falsified. Due to the complex nature of human behaviour, the specific context in which the transitional event has taken place, and the weighting toward an hermeneutical and dialectical methodological process, the testing of specific hypotheses does not provide the flexibility to allow patterns and conflicting results to emerge as part of the research process. Further, although previous research has indicated relationships that are likely to exist between certain variables and outcomes, there are other variables that are yet to be explored. As a consequence, this investigation of transitional experiences will be guided by specific aims that are directed toward discovering and understanding relationships and differences in perceptions and behaviours of the individuals involved in the transition process.

Aims

The ultimate aim of this study is to gain a further understanding of the transitional processes experienced by athletes during their adaptation from a unique residential living environment to a new life organisation. More specifically, the project has four main aims:
1. To determine the relationship between transition model variables and reactions experienced during the transition process;

2. To determine whether athletes are more likely to have a negative or positive reaction to the transition from the Institute residential program to a new life organisation, and to describe how these reactions differ;

3. To determine which model variables are most likely to hinder or assist adjustment during the transition process;

Chapter 9

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were drawn from the residential program at the AIS (hereinafter referred to as Institute) during the years 1993 to 1997, specifically those athletes who were of pre-adolescent and adolescent age during their scholarship period. The original sample began with 215 athletes, of whom 76 were unavailable or not able to be located, and another 11 athletes who were not interested in participating.

From the original sample, 119 athletes agreed to have a transition questionnaire forwarded to them, with 22 males and 17 females returning a completed questionnaire. Participants were between the ages of 9 and 19 years during their stay at the Institute. Of the 39 athletes who completed the questionnaires, 13 participated further in a semi-structured interview, together with 7 mothers, 4 fathers, and 1 sibling.

Measures

A 15-page transition questionnaire was developed by the researcher to incorporate measurements for the array of variables described in the transition model. The primary purpose of the questionnaire was to derive information that can be used to describe the experiences and characteristics of the individuals in this particular sample, and to highlight areas of interest for more in-depth interviewing of participants. As a consequence, the measurements chosen for
statistical purposes reflect procedures for summarising and describing the relationships present in the data.

Six standardised scales were formatted into the questionnaire, together with closed and open-ended statement and questions. Details of the standardised measures that were incorporated into the transition questionnaire are as follows:

*Self Description Questionnaire III*

The Self Description Questionnaire III (SDQ III; Marsh, 1992) is a 136-item instrument comprised of 13 self-concept scales developed specifically for late adolescent and young adult populations. Each scale is comprised of 10 or 12 items, half of which are negatively worded, with each scale being scored using an eight point likert scale. Participants are asked to read each statement, and respond as to how true or false each item is, as a description of themselves (1 = definitely false, 2 = false, 3 = mostly false, 4 = more false than true, 5 = more true than false, 6 = mostly true, 7 = true, and 8 = definitely true).

For the purposes of this study, only 4 of the 13 sub-scales were utilised, namely problem-solving, global esteem, emotional stability and parent relationships. Participants were asked to respond to the items based upon how they remember thinking, feeling and behaving at the time when they were leaving the residential program.

Global esteem measures a participant’s “self-perception of themselves as effective, capable individuals who have self-confidence and self-respect and are proud and satisfied with the way they are” (Marsh, et al., 1995, p.75). Emotional stability measures self-perceptions of individuals as being calm and relaxed, being emotionally stable, and having low levels of worry. Problem-solving measures “self-perceptions of their ability to solve problems, and think
creatively and imaginatively” (p.75). Parent relationships indicates whether an individual likes and gets along with their parents, and whether there is a good quality of parent-child interaction.

The SDQ III has been found to have sound psychometric properties overall and for each individual scale (Marsh, 1992). Reliability has been established for athlete and non-athlete populations, with consistent coefficients in relation to global esteem (.92, .93), problem-solving (.84, .84), emotional stability (.89, .86), and parent relationships (.89, .89) (Marsh, 1992; Marsh et al., 1995). Cronbach’s alphas for this sample were comparable for global esteem .96 and emotional stability .89, with problem-solving .74 and parent relations .77 slightly lower.

**Athletic Identity Measurement Scale**

Athletic identity was assessed using the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), a 10-item questionnaire that measures the strength and exclusivity of identification with the athlete role using a unidimensional (Brewer et al., 1993) or multidimensional approach (Brewer & Cornelius, 2001). Participants were required to respond to each item using the same eight point likert scale described for the SDQ III. The eight point likert scale was used instead of the five point scale originally presented by Brewer et al. (1993), in order to reflect the same scale of responses used for the SDQ III and ego related statements. Brewer et al., (1993) reported a coefficient alpha of .93 indicating internal consistency, and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .89 for the original 10 item scale, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for this sample lower at .62. Brewer and Cornelius (2001) also reported good internal consistency (.81) for the 7 item AIMS (items 6, 7 and 9 excluded), with a high
correlation to the unidimensional 10 item scale, however the alpha coefficient for this sample was low at .33.

*Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire*

The Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire (TEOSQ; Duda & Nicholls, 1992) was used to measure goal orientations and sport beliefs. The TEOSQ is comprised of 21 items relating to goal orientations, with participants required to respond on a seven point likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = moderately agree, 3 = slightly agree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = slightly disagree, 6 = moderately disagree, and 7 = strongly disagree). Responses to the goal orientation items follow the statement “I felt really successful when.....”, and for sport beliefs the statement “People succeed if....”.

Duda and Nicholls (1992) reported four goal orientation factors, with the two main orientations relating to task and ego. Task orientation represents an individual’s motivation to achieve goals relating to improving one’s skill or gaining insight or knowledge, and perceptions that success is related to effort. Ego orientation represents the goal of establishing one’s superiority over others, and the perception that success relates to superior ability. Two sub-categories of goal orientation are co-operation, that is the goal of collaboration with peers in order to achieve objectives, and work avoidance where the goal is to not work hard to achieve success.

Duda and Nicholls’ (1992) four sport belief factors were also utilised, representing attitudes relating to the reasons why people are successful. Motivation/effort relates to beliefs that success is related to effort and collaboration; deception that success is related to the use of deceptive tactics;
ability that success is related to the level of natural talent and ability; and external factors the belief that success results from external factors.

The psychometric properties of the TEOSQ have been found to be internally consistent and reliable, with Cronbach’s alphas for task ranging from .71 to .89, ego .80 to .87, work avoidance .66 and co-operation .66, and reliability co-efficient alphas for task at .88 and ego .86. (Chi & Duda, 1995; Duda & Nicholls, 1992; Li, Harmer, Chi, & Vongjaturapat, 1996; Li, Harmer, Acock, Vongjaturapat & Boonverabut, 1997; Li, Harmer, Duncan, Duncan, Acock & Yamamoto, 1998). Similar Cronbach’s alphas were indicated for this sample for task at .78 and ego .87 orientation, but higher alphas were indicated for co-operation .87 and work avoidance .78.

With regard to sport beliefs, Duda and Nicholls (1992) reported coefficient alphas of .87 for motivation/effort, .76 for deception, .67 for ability, and .79 for external factors, with this sample indicating a similar pattern with .91 for motivation/effort, .79 for deception, .64 for ability, and .63 for external factors.

Achievement Orientation Questionnaire

Whitehead’s (1995) Achievement Orientation Questionnaire (AOQ) was used as the basis for measuring achievement orientations in a sport environment. The AOQ is an 18 item scale comprised of four factors namely ability, task mastery, social approval and intrinsic factors. Participants were asked to respond to the items following the statement “I felt successful because....”, using a seven point likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = moderately agree, 3 = slightly agree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = slightly disagree, 6 = moderately disagree, and 7 = strongly disagree).
Ability orientation measures the extent to which an individual desires to demonstrate high ability and avoid demonstrating low ability in relation to others, whereas task-mastery orientation is characterised by a desire to be involved in the task itself. Social approval measures the extent to which an individual tends to exhibit behaviours designed to please others, while intrinsic factors measures an individual’s motivation relating to internal desire to achieve rather than being influenced by external factors.

Test-retest reliabilities of .33 to .54 have been reported with modified versions of the scale, as well as concurrent and discriminant validity (Pemberton, Petlichkoff & Ewing, 1986). Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .69 to .91 (ability), .70 to .80 (task mastery), .62 to .91 (social approval) and .60 to .84 (intrinsic factors) have been reported (Pemberton, et al., 1986; Whitehead, 1995). For this study only 14 of the original items were used after four items were dropped due to reported low factor loadings (< .40) (Whitehead, 1995). Cronbach’s alpha coefficients remained acceptable with ability at .82, task mastery .89, social approval .73, and intrinsic factors at .64.

Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences

Participants’ coping styles were measured using the Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (A-COPE) scale developed by Patterson and McCubbin (1987). The scale contains 54 items that identify different types of coping styles that adolescents exhibit during problem or difficult situations. Patterson and McCubbin (1987) identified 12 factors within the original scale, namely developing self-reliance and optimism, seeking spiritual support, engaging in demanding activity, developing social support, solving family problems, investing in close friends, seeking professional support, avoiding
problems, seeking diversions, relaxing, ventilating feelings, and being
humorous.

For the purposes of this study, the Patterson and McCubbin (1987)
factors will not be used for correlational or multivariate statistical analysis, but
rather an emphasis on analysis of individual items. Analysis of the structure of
A-COPE has found mixed results with a number of studies indicating only a
three factor structure (Dusek & Danko, 1994; Mullis & Chapman, 2000), as
opposed to the 12 factor indicated by Patterson and McCubbin (1987). Given
the discrepancy of the scale factor structure, there is some doubt as to the
veracity of using either factor structure as a means of conducting multivariate
analysis. However, the individual coping strategies are useful in providing
information about preferred strategies, changes in coping strategies, or patterns
of use, and therefore can be used for a descriptive analysis of transition
experiences.

As the A-COPE items are not going to be used based upon a factor
structure, a further nine items were added to the original scale, including mental
skills such as positive thinking and mental imagery which are coping skills that
elite athletes are likely to have been exposed to. Similarly, a number of
behaviours such as gambling and reduced training intensity were added as
possible consequences of a response to changes in sport needs, and also
culturally accepted activities.

Participants were asked to respond to each type of coping strategy on a
five point likert scale (1 = never, 2 = hardly ever, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 =
always), with regard to how often they used each behaviour as a coping strategy
in response to daily hassles and stressful situations. Two likert scales were
provided for each coping strategy, and participants were asked to determine
their use of that strategy ‘during your stay at the Institute’ and ‘after leaving the Institute’.

\textit{Modified Scales}

Parental involvement and responsiveness was measured using seven modified items from the Index of Parenting Style (IPS - Lamborn, et al., 1991), and four items from the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA - Armsden and Greenberg, 1987).

The acceptance/involvement scale measures the extent to which an adolescent perceives his or her parents as loving, responsive and involved. Five statements in the original index required the participants to respond to each item based on two categories “usually true” and “usually false”. Four of the five statements were included in the present study, with only the statement ‘he (or she) helps me with my school work if there is something I don’t understand’, deleted due to the lack of parental input in school matters in a residential program.

In the original scale a further four statements related to parental praise and interest in their child, and required the participants to respond to the statements in categories of ‘never, sometimes or usually’. Two of these statements were not used due to the inappropriateness of the question for a residential setting (eg: my family does something fun together). Two questions were modified to make them of a more generic nature (ie: ‘when you get a good grade in school, how often do you parents or guardians praise you’ was changed to ‘my father (or mother) often praised me for my efforts’). The four statements selected from the IPPA were; ‘my parents respect my feelings’, ‘my parents
expect too much from me’, ‘when we discuss things, my parents consider my point of view’, and ‘my parents trust my judgment’.

Duplicate statements were created for the 11 statements to represent the involvement and responsiveness of the mother and the father separately, or the most important caregiver/s (eg: guardian, step-parent, grandparent). Participants were required to respond to each of the statements on an eight point likert scale representative of the one used in the SDQ III (where 1 = definitely false, 2 = false, 3 = mostly false, 4 = more false than true, 5 = more true than false, 6 = mostly true, 7 = true, and 8 = definitely true).

Internal reliability analysis for the modified statements of the IPS and IPPA was conducted to determine the usefulness of the scale in measuring parental involvement and responsiveness. With regard to the original IPS scale, Steinberg et al. (1994) reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .72 for the father acceptance/involvement scale, and .76 for mother acceptance/involvement scale. Initial analysis for the modified scale indicated low item-total correlations for question two (‘my mother/father kept pushing me to do my best in whatever I did’) and question five (‘my mother/father kept pushing me to think independently), and therefore these two items were dropped from the scale.

Analysis was then repeated on the remaining nine statements, with Cronbach’s alpha for father involvement/responsiveness at .88, and .84 for mother. A strong correlation was also found between the SDQ III parent relation score, and the score for father ($r = .63^{**}$) and mother ($r = .61^{**}$) involvement and responsiveness.
Closed and Open-ended Questions

The remainder of the questions and statements contained in the questionnaire (Appendix A), were presented in one of the following formats:

a) Thirty-eight closed statements or questions specific to non-categorical variables described in the model. The participant responds on a likert scale format, with scoring keys for each of the non-standardized likert scales as follows:

- Satisfaction with personal life and sporting performance during the stay at the institute (1 = very satisfied, 2 = somewhat satisfied, 3 = unsure, 4 = somewhat dissatisfied, 5 = very dissatisfied);
- Involvement with elite peers in the Institute environment and perceptions regarding the transition event (1 = yes, 2 = maybe, 3 = no).
- Influence of parental values, goals and expectations (1 = yes, 2 = maybe, 3 = no)

b) Thirty-one closed statements or questions specific to categorical variables described in the model to which the participant responds by selecting the most relevant category.

c) Nineteen open-ended statements or questions that require participants to describe their experiences in their own words, with analysis conducted using qualitative methods.
Procedure

A 15 page questionnaire was developed (Appendix A), along with an information letter (Appendix B), a Notice of Agreement to Disclose Identity/Contact Details for Interviews (Appendix C), and an Informed Consent form for participants who were still under the age of 18 years at the time of the survey mail-out (Appendix D).

Pilot Study

The original draft of the questionnaire was distributed to 10 individuals with various educational backgrounds, who were between the ages of 22 and 50. A small, adult sample was used to check the questionnaire due to the researcher’s desire to maintain some confidentiality regarding the nature of the project during the development stage. Although the target sample for the project were individuals who were of adolescent age during their scholarship period, the majority of participants were adults at the time of completing the research.

The 10 participants were instructed to check the questionnaire for appropriate format, and identify any questions that were difficult to understand or needed re-wording. The only problematic question was contained in the SDQ III, namely “overall I have a very poor self-concept”. Participants were unsure as to the meaning of self-concept, and as a consequence the phrase (how you see yourself), was added to the end of the original statement. Given the complexity of the research framework, and the need for the researcher to design a questionnaire, a pilot study would normally have been conducted prior to selection of the research sample. However, in this situation no pilot study was conducted for the project for a number of reasons:
1. The transition questionnaire was designed very specifically for athletes who had lived in the AIS residential program, and therefore a sample of non-AIS athletes would not have been able to complete the questionnaire adequately;

2. The original number of athletes from which the sample was to be drawn was already very small, and use of a pilot study using participants who had been residents at the program would have significantly reduced the number of athletes available for the primary data collection process;

3. A certain degree of confidentiality regarding the project was desired, and therefore use of a non-AIS sample in a pilot study was not deemed to be appropriate.

The Sampling Method

A purposive sampling method was selected, whereby a specific time frame (1993 to 1997) and age criteria (19 years and under) was used to define the sample required. The time frame was selected based upon ongoing changes in the nature of the AIS program before and after that time, which may have affected transition experiences. Every athlete who fulfilled the sampling criteria was included in the initial sampling procedure, with 215 names and contact details being provided by the Elite Sport Unit at the AIS. The researcher undertook to contact each athlete by telephone during 1998 in order to advise them of the nature of the project, and to ascertain their willingness to have a survey forwarded to them.

Of the 215 names provided on the list, 62 had no address or telephone number and were not able to be contacted despite efforts to locate them. Fourteen athletes were on the international circuit (eg: tennis) and had no fixed
address at which to contact them, and another 11 athletes were not interested in participating and expressed no opinion about their experiences. When making telephone contact, a further nine mothers received the enquiry regarding the research, and refused to allow their child to be advised of the project. In each instance the parent was too distressed about their child’s experiences during and after their involvement with the AIS program, and the negative impact the athlete’s involvement had on other family members.

The remaining 119 athletes agreed to have a questionnaire forwarded to them in a reply paid envelope (55.3% of the original sample). The participants were advised that they were under no obligation to return the questionnaire once they had received it if they had changed their mind about participating in the survey. They were also advised that disclosure of their name and sport was optional, and that all information would be treated confidentially. The researcher also explained to each athlete that they had the option of allowing their identity to be disclosed in the research by signing the Notice of Agreement to Disclose Identity form, and that such an agreement could be withdrawn at any time should the participant desire it. The researcher also explained to the participants that the project involved an interview stage, and that they, and their family members, had the option to participate in an interview to discuss their transition experience in more detail.

Of the 119 questionnaires forwarded to participants during 1998 and 1999, 39 were returned completed (33% return rate). A reminder letter was forwarded to athletes who had not returned a questionnaire, with advice that they were under no obligation to participate. Of the 39 athletes who returned a questionnaire, 19 agreed to be interviewed to discuss the issues further. Following receipt of the questionnaires, participants were forwarded a thank-
you letter for their time and consideration, and advised that they would receive ongoing feedback regarding the project status.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis was then conducted to determine any themes that could be used to direct further enquiries during the interview process.

**New Variables**

Two new variables were created in order to allow analysis to be conducted relating to the impact of the transition event, and the nature of the transition reactions experienced by the athletes in relation to the variables described in the model. With respect to the impact of the event, the researcher used previous research findings to identify a number of physical, behavioural and social variables as indicators of the types of changes that are likely to occur as a result of the transition event. The degree or nature of the change is not relevant with regard to the impact of the event, only whether a change actually occurred. If no change was experienced on a specific variable, then the participant received a score of zero; but if a change did occur, then a score of one was allocated to that variable. The following variables were used for the scoring process:

a). Living arrangements – was a change in residency arrangements required following termination of the scholarship? (yes = 1, no = 0, using information derived from living choices indicated on page seven of the questionnaire).
b). Social – was there a severing of social ties, or changes required relating to relationships with AIS peers, work or school friendships? (yes = 1, no = 0, using information derived from one statement on page nine of the questionnaire, ‘spend more time socialising with friends or family’, and open-ended questions).

c). Physical/behavioural – did changes occur in eating habits, sleeping patterns, training patterns, or relaxation? (yes = 1, no = 0 for each statement on page nine of the questionnaire).

d). Role Change – did a role change occur, for example, from athlete/student to full-time student, or athlete/student to full-time employment? (yes = 1, no = 0, using information derived from sport, career and study choices indicated on page seven of the questionnaire, and open-ended questions).

An impact score was then achieved by adding up the total number of changes experienced by the participant, with a maximum possible score of 20. The event was considered to be low impact in terms of the number of changes experienced, if the total impact score was less than 5. The event was considered as a moderate impact if the score was between 5 and 15, and a high impact event if the score was greater than 15.

The second variable created relates to the type of reactions experienced by the athlete during the transition process, hereinafter referred to as Transition Reaction. Assessment of the Transition Reaction was made based on previous research findings relating to transition experiences, and the physical, emotional
and behavioural reactions likely to be exhibited during the adaptation process. Criteria for the Transition Reaction score was based upon the following:

a) Assessment of the number of positive and negative emotions experienced over a 12 month period from the start of the transition process. Participants were able to select from 21 positive emotions over three specific time periods; the first month, three to six months, and six to twelve months after leaving the residential program. A low score represents less than 5 positive emotions over all three time periods, a moderate score 6 to 15, and a high score more than 16 positive emotions. Participants were also able to select from 28 negative emotions over the same three time periods, with a low score representing less than 7 negative emotions, a moderate score seven to 21, and a high score more than 21 negative emotions.

b) The participant’s description of adaptive and non-adaptive behaviours that occurred during the transition process.

c) The participant’s description of changes to social support networks, and/or social functioning during the transition process.

Each participant was given a Transition Reaction score along a continuum, using a seven point likert scale (-3 = very negative reaction, -2 = moderately negative reaction, -1 = slightly negative reaction, 0 = no reaction, 1 = slightly positive reaction, 2 = moderately positive reaction, and 3 = very positive reaction). In order to be assigned a Transition Reaction score, the information provided by the participant was required to fit a
specific criteria, the details of which are described on the following pages. A score was allocated to a participant if they fulfilled the criteria described in (a), and the criteria described in at least one other category for that particular reaction score (b, c, d)

-3 Very negative reaction
   a) moderate to high negative emotions and low positive emotions, lasting 12 months;
   b) non-adaptive behavioural reactions to changes in sport, career/study and/or living arrangements, lasting 12 months or more (e.g.: poor training habits, rebellious behaviour, drug use, failure to seek out information or make plans for the future);
   c) psychological mood disturbance or disorders of a clinical nature (bulimia, anorexia nervosa, depression);
   d) difficulties with social network and/or social functioning, lasting up to 12 months or more (disrupted family and/or peer relationships, difficulties adjusting to new work or study environments, social withdrawal).

-2 Moderately negative reaction
   a) moderate negative emotions and low positive emotions, lasting up to 12 months;
   b) non-adaptive behavioural reactions to changes in sport, career/study and/or living arrangements, lasting up to 12 months;
   c) difficulty with social network and/or social functioning lasting up to 12 months.
-1 Slightly negative reaction
  a) moderate negative emotions lasting up to six months, and low positive emotions lasting up to 12 months;
  b) mildly non-adaptive behavioural reactions to changes in sport, career/study and/or living arrangements, lasting from one to three months;
  c) difficulty with social network and/or social functioning, lasting one to three months.

0 Indifferent reaction
  a) low negative and positive emotions throughout the 12 month period;
  b) no apparent behavioural reactions to changes in sport, career/study and/or living arrangements;
  c) maintenance of social network and/or social functioning.

1 Slightly positive reaction
  a) moderate number of positive emotions lasting up to six months, and low negative emotions lasting up to 12 months;
  b) adaptive behavioural reactions to changes in sport, career/study, and/or living arrangements (eg: changing habits to suit new demands, seeking out information, goal setting, planning for the future);
  c) maintenance or improvement of social network and/or social functioning.
2 **Moderately positive reaction**
   
a) moderate positive and low negative emotions lasting up to 12 months;
   
b) adaptive behavioural reactions to changes in sport, career/study, and/or living arrangements;
   
c) maintenance or improvement of social network and/or social functioning.

3 **Very positive reaction**
   
a) moderate to high positive, and low negative emotions, lasting at least 12 months;
   
b) adaptive behavioural reactions to changes in sport, career/study, and/or living arrangements;
   
c) maintenance or improvement of social network and/or social functioning.

*Data Preparation for Quantitative Analysis*

Statistical analysis was conducted by the researcher using the SPSS statistical computer software. Data screening of all quantitative variables was undertaken prior to analysis. A small number of missing values occurred randomly in the continuous measures, and in each instance the mean value for that variable was used to replace the missing value (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). No extreme outliers were identified on any of the continuous variables, and testing of assumptions was found to be satisfactory. Internal reliability analysis was conducted on all standardised measures, as previously indicated.
All statistical analysis was conducted using an alpha level of .05 as the minimum significance criteria. Due to the non-directional nature of the aims of the study, Pearson's R Two-Tailed Correlations were used to test relationships between the model variables, unless otherwise indicated. Independent Samples t-Tests were used to test differences associated with variable groupings where assumptions relating to sampling and normality were met (Kolmogrov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests). Assumptions of homogeneity of variance were also met for each t-test, unless otherwise stated. Where assumptions of normality were not satisfied, differences between variable groupings were analysed using the Mann-Whitney U-Test.

Interview Procedure

Following the survey data analysis, the 19 athletes who had signed the agreement to be contacted regarding an interview, were telephoned to ascertain their willingness to participate further. Of the 19 participants who originally indicated a willingness to be interviewed, six male and five female athletes participated in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. A male and female athlete who were residing overseas, participating via the internet. A further seven mothers, three fathers and one sister participated in face-to-face interviews, with one other father participating in a telephone interview. Of the 13 athletes interviewed, eight were rated on the negative side of the transition reaction continuum, one had an indifferent reaction, and four were positive.

Interviews were conducted at a time and place suitable for the participants, and a tape recorder was used to record the interviews. Interview times ranged from thirty minutes to three hours, with an average interview lasting one and a half hours. The interview session followed a semi-structured
format, with information gathered from the questionnaire stage used as a guide for directing the interview questions. Participants were also encouraged to talk about any issues that they felt were relevant to their experiences. Examples of interview questions are provided in Appendix E, but the general content of the interviews focused on the following key areas:

a) Experiences at the AIS, including transition into the program, type of support provided by coaching staff and houseparents, impact on education, impact of AIS lifestyle, and peer relationships.

b) Experiences during the transition from the AIS program, including family relationships, integration into school/work environments, peer relationships, type of support provided, behaviours and mood state.

c) Opportunity for participants to discuss any other issues that they felt were important or relevant to the project.

d) Discussion of ideas for improving the transition process.

Participants were advised that they were free to withdraw from the interview at any stage without providing an explanation, and that they could request for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time should they wish to discuss a matter ‘off the record’. Each interview was then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Two copies of the interview transcript were sent to the participants. Participants were instructed to read through the transcript and identify any information that they would prefer not to be used in the thesis, or
that they wished to amend for accuracy. Any changes were to be noted on one copy of the transcript, and returned to the researcher via reply paid mail. Participants retained a copy of the transcript, and any changes to the interview transcript were made prior to qualitative analysis commencing. Returning transcripts to participants for verification, is considered to be one way of enhancing the credibility of data obtained from the interview process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

During the interview process a number of references were made by participants to official enquiries, correspondence between participants and the AIS, and media reports, which related to issues discussed during the interview. As a consequence, an investigation of the documentation relating to events that occurred during the period 1993 to 1997, was undertaken using a number of different sources.

**Documentation Data Collection**

The researcher conducted a search of newspaper articles using the National Sport and Information Center archives at the Australian Sports Commission, Canberra. The NSIC archives include newspaper clippings from all major newspapers throughout Australia, and the search was conducted on AIS related clippings available for the years 1993 to 1998 inclusively. Articles were selected for analysis if they contained information and quotes relating to the AIS residential program during the research timeframe.

A total of 32 articles where deemed to be relevant to the theoretical framework. The articles represented the investigations and opinions of 18 different authors, and six articles published without author references (Butler, 1995; Callinan & Chappell, 1998; Chappell, 1993a, 1993b, 1995; Chappell &

The articles were derived from 14 different newspapers or magazines from around Australian, including the Advertiser (SA), Advocate (TAS), Age, Australian, Australian Swimming & Fitness, Bulletin, Canberra Times, Courier Mail (QLD), Daily Telegraph (NSW), Illawarra Mercury (NSW), Sunday Age (VIC), Sunday Mail (QLD), Sydney Morning Herald (NSW), and West Australian (WA).

The subject matter included quotes from ten athletes whose names appeared in the original list of athletes provided by the AIS Elite Sport Unit, as well as nine mothers and five fathers. These individuals were involved in the residential sports represented by the participants in this survey, but were not athletes or parents who completed a questionnaire or an interview for the research project.

Eight AIS staff members were also quoted, including two different AIS Directors, three coaches, one houseparent, one nutritionist and one medical practitioner. Quotes from 13 non-AIS individuals were also included in the data collection due to their relevance to the information collected from the research participants. The non-AIS sample was represented by 10 coaches and officials from various sporting organisations and sporting institutes within Australia, two medical practitioners, one clinical psychologist, and one previous AIS male athlete. A number of articles were also included which provided information on an investigation of 34 athletes involved in the AIS tennis program.
The final piece of documentation that was used for analysis was the Report of the Independent Inquiry Into Women’s Artistic Gymnastics at the Australian Institute of Sport (Opie, 1995). Sections of the Opie inquiry and report related to incidences and athletes who either participated in the data collection process, or who were eligible under the sampling criteria. The Opie inquiry was conducted in response to AIS athlete claims of emotional and physical abuse (Opie, 1995), with information provided in the report detailing the experiences of a number of gymnasts who lived in the residency during the research timeframe. The scope of the report covers areas of interest including lifestyle issues, education, socialisation, homesickness, and the impact of residential living on family relationships.

Data Preparation for Qualitative Analysis

Responses to interview and survey questions, selected newspaper articles, and the Opie (1995) report, were analysed by the researcher using the qualitative software analysis program QSR NUD.IST 4. This program allows the researcher to code data according to an indexing structure, and to monitor the occurrence of themes throughout the information being analysed. For the purposes of this study, the qualitative analysis process was guided by the theoretical framework, with the data coded based upon its’ applicability to the factors and variables identified in the transition model.

For the purposes of this study, the concept of general dimension, often referred to in qualitative reports, are the model factors. Higher order themes are the variables to be examined within each of those factors. Lower order themes are those issues that were raised in relation to the model factor or variable being
analysed, which were considered to be related to, or a derivative of, one of the model variables.

In relation to identification of athletes, the majority of athletes who participated in the survey and interview procedure consented to the disclosure of their identities as part of the presentation of the material. However, the permission to identify athletes was sought in relation to the preparation of a resource manual for use by Institute athletes, and as such individual athletes will not be identified in the reporting process. Quotations used in the results section of this study will only indicate the gender and sport of the athlete or parent to whom the quote is attributed to. Where an athlete or coach has been named in-text, the letter X has been used to replace the name of the individual to preserve anonymity.
Chapter 10

Results

Describing the Sample

**Participant Descriptors**

In order to discriminate between qualitative responses and statistical results for athlete and parent participants in this study, results will be described using the terms ‘athletes’ and ‘parents’ rather than the generic term of ‘participants’. Qualitative information was also collected relating to ‘non-participants’ in the form of media reports and the Opie (1995) enquiry.

**Demographics**

The athletes in this study were 22 males and 17 females who were involved in the AIS residential program between 1993 and 1997. At the time of data collection their ages ranged from 13 to 23 years \( (M = 20.23, SD = 2.48) \). The athletes entered the AIS program between the ages of 8 and 18 years \( (M = 14.82, SD = 2.66) \), and left the program between the ages of 8 and 19 years, with the majority leaving at 16 or 17. The length of stay in residency varied from 2 to 72 months. Seven athletes (18%) stayed less than 12 months, 25 (64%) stayed between 12 to 24 months, four (10%) stayed 25 to 36 months, and three (8%) stayed between 36 to 72 months.
In relation to sporting participation, 11 of the athletes were on residential scholarships for basketball (28%), 12 for soccer (31%), 9 for gymnastics (23%), and one from each sport of diving, golf, netball, tennis, waterpolo, and wrestling. One athlete did not indicate what sport they were involved in.

All of the athletes were living in the family home prior to entering the residential program, with 24 (62%) living in a city setting, and 15 (38%) in a regional area. The majority of athletes perceived their family’s socioeconomic status as middle income ($n = 29, 74%$), with a further 8 (21%) describing their situation as low income, and only 2 (5%) from a high income bracket. Thirty-eight of the athletes were attending full-time primary or high school prior to the program, with only one participating in full-time sport at the time. The majority of athletes came from an Australian ethnic background ($n = 27, 69%$), with a further 2 (5%) from the United Kingdom, and 10 (26%) from other European ethnic backgrounds.

In relation to the interview process, five female and eight male athletes agreed to participate, representing the sports of basketball, gymnastics, soccer, tennis, and waterpolo. Family members of eight athletes also agreed to participate in the interview process, including seven mothers, four fathers and one sibling.
The Transition Reaction

Each athlete was assigned a transition reaction score using the previously described criteria, with the sample representing various transition experiences. Eighteen athletes experienced a negative transition reaction, seven had an indifferent reaction, and 14 experienced a positive reaction to the event, as illustrated in Figure 8. Details of the nature of the transition reactions, and issues relating to those reactions, will be presented in the subsequent chapters relating to the three major factors of the transition model.

![Bar chart showing types of transition reactions](image)

**Figure 8.** Athlete transition reactions ($N = 39; M = -.4, SD = 1.60$)

In relation to the athletes who chose to participate in the interview process, eight of the athletes experienced negative transitions, one exhibited an indifferent reaction to the process, and four experienced a positive reaction.
Chapter 11

Results

Approaching the Transition

The results of this study indicated that a number of variables present when approaching the transition process, were related to the transition reactions experienced by the athletes in this sample. Whether the event was anticipated or unanticipated was not significantly related to transition reactions, however congruency of expectations was found to be relevant. Context variables such as the nature of scholarship termination, homesickness, continued participation in sport, and quality of education, were also found to be related to athlete reactions. In terms of the impact of the event, the number of changes associated with the transition was not found to be related to transition reactions, however the nature of those changes did appear to be of some significance in understanding why different transition reactions were experienced.

Type of Event

The data from this study indicated that anticipating an event would occur at a specific time, did not increase the likelihood that an individual would experience a positive reaction to that event. All of the athletes in this sample
were aware that termination of residency would eventually occur at some point. As a consequence, the event itself was an anticipated one, but the timing of the event was not always anticipated. The majority of athletes \( n = 25, 64\% \) anticipated that the transition event would occur at the time it happened. For these individuals, the length of involvement in the residential program was clearly defined within the terms of their scholarship agreements, and therefore the timing of the transition out of the program was a natural progression. Five (13\%) athletes somewhat anticipated the event, with a further eight (20\%) not anticipating that the change was going to happen at the time it occurred. Cessation of scholarships earlier than anticipated resulted from internal and external influences, including homesickness, injury, poor performances, coach conflict, Institute restructuring, and professional contract offers. Only one athlete described a non-event where a scholarship was not extended as anticipated.

An Independent Samples t-Test indicated no difference in transition reaction based upon the type of event experienced \( t (37) = .16, p > .05 \), with an anticipated event just as likely to be associated with a negative reaction \( M = -.49, SD = 1.47 \) as an unanticipated or non event \( M = -.32, SD = 1.77 \). Similarly, no relationship was found between the type of event, and whether the athlete felt prepared to deal with the change \( r (39) = .13, p > .05 \). The experiences described by the athletes in this sample give some clarification as to why no relationship was found between transition reaction and level of
anticipation, with the interaction of readiness and preparation varying greatly across the sample.

Firstly, anticipating the timing of termination did not ensure that the athlete had the coping skills, knowledge or experience to adequately prepare for the impending event, particularly younger athletes who had been involved in the residential program for long periods of time, as the experiences of one female gymnast illustrates:

It was probably one of the worst times in my life. I could actually say that I felt like I’d been torn apart. I was eating that much. I’d gotten fat. I wasn’t training. Couldn’t be bothered training because my scholarship hadn’t actually finished until December. The Games were finished, and I’d come home (to AIS) by October. So I had finished and I had still three months or two months left of my contract...my goal had finished. My whole life, the Olympic Games had finished. I didn’t know where to go. I didn’t know where to start. I didn’t know whether to come home. What should I do? I didn’t know what to do with my time. I felt that lost, that that was it. I started eating. Because I just felt lost, depressed, didn’t now where I was going....It was the worst time I had. I don’t know how many times I used to have sleepless nights and I just used to cry. But then I used to get so angry because I couldn’t make up my mind (to continue gymnastics or not).
It was that stressful. And finally one day I said ‘yeah, that’s it’....So I just felt really alone. And I used to cry all the time because I just felt so icky in the stomach and stuff like that. Oh everything. I felt like I was going through depression something shocking, because not only was I going through that, but just the incentive that I had nowhere else to go. I’d done the biggest goal in my life. I’d done the training for the goal. It’s finished, now what do I do? I was lost. I felt completely lost. I didn’t know where I was going, what I was doing. Do I go to school? What do I do tomorrow? My whole life I’ve gotten up at 6.30 and gone to training at 7.00, done this. Go to school 11.00 ‘til 3.00, 3.30 ‘til 7.00 go to training, 7.00 to 7.30 dinner, from 7.30 to 8.30 shower, 8.30 to 9.30 watch TV, go to bed at 9.30. My whole life has been like that, and now all of a sudden I’ve had to fend for myself and think for myself, and I had no-one there to help me.

In contrast, a male basketball player who had a positive transition, described the benefits of having a coach who forced the issue of preparation before the termination of the scholarship:
...our coach said I want you to go home and work out what you’re going to do if you stay home... and I went home and talked to mum and dad about it, saying you know, if I don’t go back (to the Institute) this is what I’m going to do. So I had something worked out... If I didn’t do that I would have been a bit of a nervous wreck not knowing what I was going to do and that. But I had something worked out.

For a female basketball player who had a slight negative reaction to the transition, the experience was different again. She was aware of the date her scholarship would terminate, and made extensive use of support staff, including nutrition, career and education, psychology, and confirmation of a position in a professional team. However, even with such extensive preparation, the athlete still expressed some concerns about what to expect during the transition:

I was looking at it positively, like my time’s up and it’s time to move on to something bigger. I suppose the day I actually had to leave was probably the worst because it was actually true that I was leaving. And I suppose that was a little bit of a shock to actually say goodbye to everyone, and that you wouldn’t be doing the thing that you’d been doing for the last three years. It would be a whole lot different. You’re moving on to something unknown again.
Another female basketballer who was involved in the same program returned home earlier than expected due to injury. Even though she had access to the same services, she felt unprepared for the change, and experienced a very negative transition reaction:

When I left the AIS most of what I had worked for had been taken away, which left me kind of lost. I had no direction, no ambition, and no motivation.

One theme that did emerge from the qualitative data, was the role of expectancies associated with the event. Athletes who anticipated the event, and had developed expectancies about the transition that were congruent with what actually occurred, were more likely to exhibit more positive transition experiences. In contrast, athletes who anticipated the event, but had developed expectancies that were ultimately incongruent with what they experienced during the transition, or who displayed apprehensive or pessimistic expectations about their transition, were more likely to have negative transition reactions.

The experiences of two male soccer players who both had difficult transitions, illustrates the impact that preparation and expectations can have on adjustment. One player left the Institute at the anticipated time, and commenced a professional contract overseas. He indicated feeling unprepared to deal with
the change at that time, and subsequently experienced a negative reaction to the new situation:

When I left the Institute my initial feeling was of sadness and uncertainty.... In hindsight I wasn’t ready to go overseas. I was carrying injuries and wasn’t fit enough, which in turn showed in my performances, making me feel inadequate. I began to question everything, my ability, my confidence....I think the best advice I can give to any soccer athlete leaving the Institute is to weigh up their options, and that it’s okay to take a step backwards. The Institute inflates your ego. Swallow your pride.

In contrast, the other player experienced a transition at an unanticipated time, also due to the offer of a professional contract. Although this player felt somewhat prepared to deal with the change at that time, his experiences mirrored those of the previous player:

When I left the AIS I found it very tough indeed. I moved overseas and became a professional, but it wasn’t what I thought it would be like. What a shock I received. I was homesick and didn’t settle in at all. I just wanted to leave from the day I arrived.
Incongruent or apprehensive expectations about the transition environment were not only experienced by athletes who were required to adapt to a new environment, but were also exhibited by some athletes who returned to the familiar environment of the family home. In these instances, incongruent expectations were likely to be associated with adaptation to family routines and independence issues, and unforeseen disruption to social networks.

The thing is that a lot of the time you don’t know what you’re in for until you get home and you’re gone. A week, two weeks later it hits you. You don’t think, ‘oh **** I’m about to leave, I need to speak to someone about leaving’. You’re so happy to get home, and you just want to get home, that it just doesn’t matter. I’m going home, why do I need to talk to anyone. What more do I need to say. I’m going home to my family’... but a couple of weeks down the track you start thinking ‘I’m not used to these four walls. I’m not used to this bed’. You start to realise that you’ve moved and you’ve got a new life now. Then you’re in for it. (Male – Soccer)
In contrast, athletes who had congruent and optimistic expectations about the transition, were more likely to experience a positive reaction to the event:

I love home, and I went home! Leaving the AIS was easy because of the support I had. I did need a break, and I was ready to leave the Institute.

(Female – Basketball)

One issue that was identified by a number of athletes in relation to expectations, was the benefit of being better informed about what was likely to occur when the transition event took place:

Definitely! I actually did that for a girl that went to the Institute last year. I actually sat down before she went and actually told her what to expect. And now when she’s back home too. She was only away for a year so it wasn’t as bad for her as I think it was for my three years, but I think it definitely makes a difference. Because, say telling a person to keep contact with people at home just in case you want to go back home, and so I told her all the pros and cons about what to look forward to, and things like that. And then definitely when you come home you’d have someone to actually contact and say, look this is happening to me, can you help me. (Female – Basketball)
I had a guy I knew that was there the year before (at AIS), and he sort of dropped his bundle when he came back. And one thing he said to me was ‘oh you’ll see people’, he said, ‘I had it happen to me, you’ll see people for the next three to four years who’ll say you’re back on holidays are you’. And it still happens to me now... and he said that would happen to me, and I thought oh! I liked hearing that. And then when it happened I thought ‘yeah he’s got it spot on’. (Male – Waterpolo)

*Context of the Event*

Results from this study indicated that the majority of participating athletes and parents perceived their involvement in the residential program as being a fruitful and positive experience. However, the manner in which residential scholarships were terminated, homesickness, continued participation in sport, and quality of education, were contextual variables that were found to be associated with positive and negative transition experiences.
The Pre-Transition Environment

A common theme expressed by athletes and their families, regardless of their transition experiences, was that the Institute provided a unique and valuable opportunity in terms of the facilities and services available, as illustrated by the following comments:

Personally, my opinion of the Institute is it's admirable and exquisite in what it has to offer. (Male – Soccer)

I greatly value the lessons and time spent at the residential institution, and believe that it provided me with opportunities that I would never have received without taking part in such a program.

(Female – Basketball)

I thought the AIS program is one of the best programs in the world, from training to socialising. I made heaps of friends, and that one year I spent there I will never forget. (Male – Soccer)
No pattern emerged in relation to the nature of transition reactions and the type of sport the athlete was involved in due to insufficient numbers in six of the nine sports, as indicated in Figure 9:

![Bar chart showing transition reaction by sport (N = 39)](image)

**Figure 9.** Transition reaction by sport (N = 39)

The residential environment was generally characterised as demanding a high level of intense physical participation, and a substantial time commitment, but only three athletes in this sample specifically referred to training and lifestyle as being a factor for terminating their involvement in the program.
The majority of athletes were either very satisfied \((n = 12, 31\%)\) or somewhat satisfied \((n = 15, 38\%)\) with their sport performances during their involvement with the program \((M = 2.28, SD = 1.25)\), with only three athletes \((8\%)\) being very dissatisfied, five \((13\%)\) somewhat dissatisfied, and four \((10\%)\) unsure. No relationship was found between sport performance satisfaction and transition reaction \(r (39) = -.20, p > .05\).

Athletes who were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their performance during the residency had generally achieved their goals, or had achieved the outcome that they desired, for example a professional contract or Olympic participation. Athletes who were not satisfied with their performances typically expressed concerns that they had not achieved their goals, or they had not appreciated or taken full advantage of what was on offer whilst in the program, as illustrated by the comments of this male soccer player who experienced a negative transition:

It was more disappointment knowing that I’d been up there for such a long period of time. The majority of my time was not spent being directional and achieving my objectives and goals. It was more spent in the social aspects of things, and my friends.
The majority of athletes did not appear to have long-term difficulty adjusting to the demands of their sport program, or the behaviour or attitudes of staff members, and as a consequence had fruitful experiences. However, evidence from various qualitative sources indicated that a small number of individuals did experience decrements in self-esteem and self-efficacy, eating disorders, or emotional disturbance, whilst involved in the program. In each instance, the athletes and their parents indicated that these experiences influenced the athlete psychologically and/or behaviourally during the transition period (examples of which are provided throughout the results section under the relevant transition factor).

Chi-square analysis of coaching styles and transition reactions did not indicate any relationship between the two variables. The majority of coaches (87%) were described as having a mixture of behaviouristic (n = 29), humanistic (n = 24), democratic (n = 22), technical (n = 22), and authoritarian styles (n = 20), with only three athletes indicating their coach adopted a singularly authoritarian approach. However, athlete and parent perceptions, and descriptions of experiences, indicated that coaching attitudes and behaviours that focused on negative reinforcement or isolation as a means of communicating information or disapproval for performances, were the most likely to be associated with decrements in self-esteem and self-efficacy whilst in the program.
Effects on self-efficacy and self-esteem were also found where decisions regarding scholarship renewals were based around selection into national team programs rather than developmental programs, or where insufficient feedback was provided as to the reasons why a scholarship was not renewed where that option was available:

With the basketball, they knew they were going to be there for one year or two, and you don’t stay any longer than two. Same with the soccer players, one or two, and then you come home and work on what you’ve learnt over there whereas the waterpolo players, you go over and you’re in the national team and it’s the elite program, and if you leave that’s pretty well it. ...Most of them just go ‘nup, I’m out of it now, gone’. And it would have been a lot better mentally if they’d have said you’re coming over and you’ve got a one year scholarship, possibly two at the end of that if something goes really, really well...I would have come back with a lot higher self esteem, I reckon. And a lot of people would have come back and tried harder (Male – Waterpolo).
A lower order theme found amongst athletes who were dissatisfied with the way their scholarship ended, was the manner in which coaches communicated with athletes and parents regarding the termination of a scholarship. The experiences of one male soccer player who stopped playing for a period of time immediately after leaving the Institute, illustrated the impact that inadequate communication can have on an athlete during a transition:

MOTHER: Sometimes they would say ‘well if I don’t think I can teach you anymore, we won’t renew your scholarship, so depending on which way you wanted to look at that, it could mean you’re really good and you’re above what they can teach you, or it might mean the opposite...I mean one guy didn’t find out until he was given his one way ticket to go home. That was the way he found out that he wasn’t coming back. To me, that’s really not very appropriate. And they (the coaching staff) didn’t even actually say goodbye to X.

FATHER: See in that way when they come out, if that’s the way it’s done, then the people who come out of the Institute, no matter what sport, think ‘well that’s it, I’m not good enough.’

ATHLETE: ...at that stage when he (the coach) told me I wasn’t coming back, it did make me feel like he was saying you’re not a good enough player, you’re not going to go all the way.
Concerns about the way scholarships were terminated were not isolated to the athletes involved, but also created some degree of stress for parents. The experiences of one player who had heard rumours that scholarships would not be renewed due to organisational changes, also described the consequences of inadequate communication:

...we had tournaments in October for a month and we came home and went to Canberra (AIS), and packed up our stuff. We do that at the end of every year, take it all home. And then a month later we’d had no contact with them, and our scholarship didn’t terminate for another month. And then a month later we got a letter in the mail saying see you later. So it wasn’t even a phone call. Nothing...not one coach and not one phone call at all. We knew, but just say we weren’t switched on, like we may not have known, so it was just crazy. That was a big thing. My parents were so mad about that, and so was everyone’s parents. They couldn’t believe it.

In contrast to these experiences, athletes who were satisfied with the way their scholarship ended, and who were provided with open and productive
communication with coaching staff prior to leaving the residency, felt they benefited from such an approach:

I was more than happy with the way my scholarship was terminated. The coaching staff were more than helpful and forward with information about my stay.

In relation to the impact of living with elite peers, no relationship was found between living with elite peers and the reactions athletes experienced during the transition. Overall the athletes enjoyed being in an environment with their elite peers, as illustrated in Figure 10.

![Perceptions of Elite Environment](image)

*Figure 10. Perceptions relating to influence of elite peers in a residential setting (N = 39)*
The athletes in this sample generally enjoyed being in an environment with other elite athletes \( (M = 1.15, SD = .43) \), and were able to make close friendships \( (M = 1.18, SD = .45) \). They felt happier training \( (M = 1.12, SD = .37) \) and living \( (M = 1.21, SD = .47) \) with athletes of a similar ability, but there was somewhat more daily pressure because they were surrounded by other elite athletes \( (M = 2.36, SD = .84) \). The athletes also felt that being around similarly talented athletes provided more motivation \( (M = 1.28, SD = .60) \), and that other elite athletes were better able to understand what they were thinking and feeling \( (M = 1.49, SD = .64) \):

We went to school with them, trained with them, and when we were in the AIS we had the eating hall as well. So we’d go to school, eat, do study hall, come out and we would just, we made a lot friends. They were around our age group so it was really good. We used to go out with them. It was good. I guess they kind of understood where you were coming from training wise. Although the sports are different, it was still real intense for every kind of sport. So it was, I don’t know, like they kind of understood without actually having to say. They understood what you were going through and the pressures and everything.
Although living with other elite athletes appeared to have a positive influence on the majority of athlete participants, some evidence was found for the 'little fish, big pond' effect, with one father describing the impact that involvement with talented peers had on his daughter’s belief in herself:

I think she felt inferior. When you think of the years leading up to the AIS scholarship she was very confident, and I’m talking more about her as a player rather than as a person. She was very confident. She had self-belief. But I think after the AIS I don’t think so. I think she was down the bottom. She would put other players on a pedestal, players that didn’t deserve to be there.

For other athletes the experience was different, with increases in self-esteem and self-efficacy being experienced due to their selection into an elite squad and training environment, as illustrated by these comments:

All of a sudden I’d gone from just playing waterpolo and not thinking too much of myself as a waterpolo player, to thinking I was a pretty good player and knowing the whole national team as my mates, whereas they would just be names and pictures in papers.... All these people were my friends, which was great.
With regard to the impact of a residency on an athlete’s personal life, no relationship was found between personal life satisfaction at the Institute and transition reaction $r (39) = -.16, p > .05$. The majority of athletes were either very satisfied ($n = 12, 31\%$) or somewhat satisfied ($n = 11, 28\%$) with their personal lives during their involvement with the program ($M = 2.36, SD = 1.25$), with only three athletes (8\%) being very dissatisfied, four (10\%) somewhat dissatisfied, and 10 (23\%) unsure.

Individuals who were satisfied with their personal lives whilst at the Institute were generally characterised by close relationships and interactions with other athletes, with a common theme of ‘family’ bonds expressed:

...there are 12 other guys there that are doing the same thing. They’re away from home, so they grow just like family. You’ve got like 11 brothers there. (Male – Basketball)

We had become very close – sisters practically. We loved and hated like sisters. (Female – Basketball)

In contrast, those who were not satisfied with their personal lives were likely to be homesick, or had experienced some difficulty developing close personal relationships, as the following examples illustrate:
Just to get back home and back to normal, back to life basically. It’s a good life, but it’s just the impact it had on my development. I just couldn’t hack being on my own too much longer. I had to find, had to have people around me. I felt like no-one cared about me, no-one loved me. I thought, ‘I just needed to be normal’.

(Male – Soccer)

The coaches only wanted us to be friends with gymnasts. They didn’t want us to have any outside contact due to the fact that adolescents rebel. They didn’t want any of that to happen. They don’t want drinking, drugs, boyfriends, and that sort of thing...Gymnastics girls. That was it. We were isolated. Gymnastics was the life and they intended to make it 100% of your life. They didn’t want any outside contact, not even the boy gymnasts were allowed to be our friends. They wanted gymnastics as everything. Which is fair enough, but no-one liked me!

(Female – Gymnastics)

Another consequence of being involved with elite peers in a residential setting, was a narrowing of friendships to athletes involved in the program. A
dominant theme amongst the athletes in this sample was that friendships in the home environment were difficult to maintain as a consequence of the demands associated with participation in an elite residential program:

I started off with a whole lot of people from home that I used to keep in contact with, but after a while either they wouldn’t write back, or I wouldn’t have time to write back to them. You’d really find out who your real friends were if you kept in contact with them... But I didn’t really have that many friends to ring me and talk to all the time. I had a few school friends that were elite athletes back here in Adelaide that used to keep track... but I suppose I didn’t really have all that many close friends at home because I was always so busy.

(Female – Basketball)

There was obviously neglect. Not intentionally, but inadvertently, that you tend to neglect those friends because now you are pursuing a different path. Those friends were not counterparts or colleagues while pursuing that path, so it was unfortunate. But it was just the way life went, in a direction you inevitably had to take. I don’t think the time leverage was there to come back to Melbourne and be with your friends, and spend that extra little bit of time with friends.

(Male – Soccer)

From the time I was in the Institute they were my friends, and I really didn’t think about the other people in Sydney. (Male – Soccer)
Although some athletes described a desire to return to familiar relationships with family or non-Institute peers, no statistical relationship was found between transition reactions and the number of home visits undertaken \( r (39) = .05, \ p > .05 \), preference for more home visits during residency \( r (39) = -.06, \ p > .05 \), or the length of stay \( r (39) = -.21, \ p > .05 \). However, the data did indicate a preference for greater family contact during the residency period, as illustrated in Figure 11:

![Pie chart](image)

**Figure 11.** Desire for more home visits during residency \( (N = 39) \)

Even though no statistical relationship was found between transition reactions and separation from the family unit, the impact of separating pre-adolescent and early to mid-adolescent children from their parents, was a common issue raised amongst athletes, parents, and professionals involved in the elite sport environment. As previously indicated the majority of athletes enjoyed the residential lifestyle, but athletes still required some adaptation to separation from the family unit.
Athletes in this study described seeking emotional support from other athletes, houseparents, supervisors, tutors, coaches, and support staff (cook, nurse, dietician, cleaner) to compensate for physical isolation from family attachment figures. However, for five athletes this support was either not available because of athlete difficulties in establishing a rapport, or was inadequate because it lacked the practical and emotional components to assist the athlete in coping with adjustment to the separation. In each instance the athlete developed symptomology associated with a significant degree of homesickness.

The impact of homesickness was the dominant theme associated with negative experiences during the residency for the athletes in this study, and those interviewed as part of the Opie Inquiry (1995). Five athletes in this study described significant emotional and/or physical consequences related to homesickness, and they either chose to leave the program earlier than expected, or were pleased when their scholarship was completed so they could return home. All five athletes returned to the family home, with two athletes experiencing positive transitions, and the remaining three negative reactions.

The data indicated that ongoing distress caused by homesickness was related to the context in which a transition event may take place, due to the likelihood of scholarships ending prematurely as a result of athlete choice or decrements in performance or health, as these different perspectives illustrate:
Although strenuous efforts are made to care for the girls in the Residence, family life cannot be replicated. Homesickness is a significant problem, although some gymnasts said that the more independently minded or older girls thrived on the lifestyle (sometimes to the disappointment of their parents who may sense rejection). Nearly all girls experience homesickness and it is an important reason, along with not being able or willing to perform at the high levels required – for girls to leave the AIS in their earlier years. (Opie, 1995, p. 295)

I think they try and make you an adult, but you’re still really a child at heart. I know in my second and third year a lot of the girls were struggling because they had to make choices that they weren’t used to making, and they were terribly homesick because they didn’t have the comfort of their parents making decisions for them and doing certain things for them. And I think that’s one thing that they have to be aware of. And some of them were quite quiet about being homesick and things like that, and so they kept it all in and then it became too much and they left. So they have to be aware of some of the one’s that might not voice it like the other ones do. (Female – Basketball)
When she first went down (to AIS) the phone would ring and we'd all be really excited, oh great it will be X. to tell us what's going on. But as time went by the phone would ring and we'd go 'oh no, it's X...she'll be on the other end of the phone crying. And we'd be on the phone for hours and be saying X. you have to hang up. No, I can't hang up. She'd be crying...it was just very stressful for everybody.

(Mother - Female Gymnast).

The athlete subsequently suffered from ongoing headaches, developed a fear of doing complex skills, and eventually chose to leave the program after less than three months.

Although evidence was found that homesickness was related to the antecedent to a transition event, no direct relationship was found between transition reactions and homesickness due to the fact that the circumstances of the transition process were different. For the two athletes who experienced a positive transition, the move back to the family home was non-eventful and perceived as a relief from the difficulties experienced whilst at the Institute. For the other three athletes, the move back to the family home was associated with a
relief to be back with loved ones, but also some difficulties adjusting to family routines and demands, re-establishing social networks, or guilt or resentment associated with not being able to achieve their goals or cope with the residential lifestyle.

Another pertinent issue raised with regard to contact with the family unit, was frustration and anxiety resulting from organisational restrictions relating to home visits, in particular where the athlete wanted such access to occur. Given that 38% of the sample would have liked the opportunity to have more home visits, their experiences are worth noting. The experiences of two athletes in particular, illustrated the impact that organisational restrictions can have on transition processes.

The mother of one long-term gymnast who experienced a negative transition and a particularly difficult time developing friendships both before and during the transition period, described some of the conditions under which the family unit was required to cope to ensure that their daughter was able to have some contact with family members and friends outside of the residential program. At the time the athlete was in residency, the number of visits to the family home were determined by the Institute program, and they were scant and restrictive for each twelve month period:
They weren't allowed home visits, but we used to sneak her home. We used to drive to Canberra on Saturday night and pick her up. But we would have to tell them that we were staying in a motel because we were not allowed to bring her home in case somehow she was injured...and that was from when she was eleven!...We used to do it every couple of months. We didn't do it too regularly because it was hard on us too....She could have someone now and then (non AIS friends), but they would ask for my permission to come from the school and visit her on a Sunday at the gym. But she couldn't go out with them to the mall....Once they (AIS staff) did ring up and asked because she wanted to stay overnight at a party or something it was, and that was like a major drama. I said 'yeah that was fine by me', but they didn't want it. They really pushed. In the end I think I put my foot down and said she could go and that was it. But they (coaches) would have stopped any outside contact. Like she could have friends at school, but not outside of school hours.
In another instance, a male gymnast who terminated involvement early due to lack of enjoyment, homesickness and nagging injuries, indicated the impact that organisational decisions and separation from the family unit can have on decisions made prior to the transition occurring:

I received very little support from the coaches at the AIS after I first said that I wanted to leave. They were not prepared to make any changes in order for me to continue with the sport, and were overall not very helpful during the last month or so when I was having such a bad time. One example of this is that I wanted to just have a break from gym to go home for a little while (1 – 2 weeks) and then come back refreshed to continue training – they wouldn’t allow this.

In contrast to these experiences, athletes who were happy with the amount of contact provided through home visits, expressed the benefits of having such contact, as illustrated by this comment:

As basketballers we were quite lucky in that we got to go home for most school holidays. And being in the national league, and having three trips to Melbourne (where my family was) to play a year, also helped in maintaining contact with my family.
One final area where organisational decisions impacted on the family unit, was the isolation that some parents felt from their child’s everyday welfare. Eight of the parents interviewed felt that they had adequate telephone contact with their children, but felt there was insufficient feedback from institutional staff regarding their children’s ongoing welfare, particularly in the early stages of their involvement in the residential program:

As a mum I had spoken to C (Coach), and C didn’t want to talk to me, didn’t want to know me. I was the mum, but from the time X (Athlete) went to the Institute it was almost like he wasn’t to have a had a mum who was there to support him. He didn’t want to know me.... It wasn’t that I was trying to baby him or mother him. I was just making sure that everything was okay. It’s such a long way away.... But I said, ‘you know X has never been away from home, and it came as such a shock’. And it was like, ‘oh he’ll be fine, he’ll be fine, he doesn’t need you fussing around’.

We felt like we weren’t parents, and that we didn’t have anything to do with it. And I suppose he was living down there (at AIS) so that’s right. But we still would have liked to have been a little bit more involved.
One of the consequences of this feeling of isolation in their child’s everyday welfare, was a reliance on the reports of their children about what was happening regarding education, social conduct, and health related issues. During the transition period, a number of parents became aware of social, health and education issues that were not disclosed to them during that period. Choices regarding education was one particular issue that parents felt they had insufficient feedback from Institutional staff members, especially when early and mid-adolescent athletes were making curriculum choices without parental input, as the comments of one mother illustrate:

The thing that I found frustrating was that because I had been the person going to parent-teacher interviews...I felt as though that side of it was completely cut off. I felt like she was totally at their mercy. We had very little choice. Initially...after the initial start of the subjects, she was really floundering along, and we had no idea really where she was getting, even though I tried to ring the education officers and that. They weren’t always available, and on the long distance call you can’t really get the information through like you can one to one, face to face.
The issue of educational choices, in particular, was an important and relevant issue raised in relation to the type of choices available in the transition environment.

*Choices Available at the Time of the Transition Event*

At the time the transition out of the residential program occurred, the athletes were required to make choices regarding their transition living arrangements, sport participation, and future career or academic prospects. In relation to accommodation choices following the program, the majority of athletes (82%) moved back to the family home immediately after leaving the Institute, as illustrated in Figure 12:

*Figure 12. Residential choices during the transition period (N = 39)*
Independent Samples t-Tests indicated that there were no significant differences in transition reactions between those who returned to the family unit ($M = -.41$, $SD = 1.54$) and those who chose other types of accommodation ($M = -.14$, $SD = 1.95$) at the onset of the transition $t (37) = .39$, $p > .05$, and 12 months after the event $t (33) = .30$, $p > .05$. Fourteen athletes (36%) made the decision to move home due to their age, indicating that they felt they were too young to live away from home, or did not have the financial resources to do so. Thirteen of the athletes (33%) also indicated that they wanted to move home because they missed being with family members. Four athletes (10%) did not want to return to the family home because they felt they needed to be independent, and two athletes (5%) made the decision to move into other institute settings to be closer to the elite facilities. Sport organisations made the decision for six of the athletes (15%) by making arrangements for them.

The majority of athletes (59%) continued in their sport at the same or a higher level immediately after the event, as illustrated in Figure 13:

![Graph showing sport choices during the transition period](image)

*Figure 13. Sport choices during the transition period ($N = 39$)*
An Independent Samples t-Test indicated that at the onset of the transition event, there was no significant difference in transition reactions $t (37) = 1.96, p > .05$ between those athletes who were able to continue in their sport at the same or a higher level ($M = .04, SD = 1.40$), and those who did not continue at the same level, either by choice or necessity ($M = -.94, SD = 1.73$). However, after a 12 month period a significant difference was found between the two groups $t (33) = 2.80, p < .01$, with those continuing at the same level less likely to experience a negative reaction ($M = .24, SD = 1.22$) than those who had either no involvement or a decreased level of involvement ($M = -1.14, SD = 1.70$).

The most common reason given for the decision to continue in sport at the same level was previous positive experiences as an athlete (28%), and for the love of the sport (28%). Wanting to continue to achieve unfulfilled goals was another common theme (26%), followed by professional contract offers (13%). For athletes who made the choice not to continue at the same level, a variety of reasons were indicated, including loss of interest (13%), injury (10%), coach/parent influence (5%), politics within the sport (3%), and lack of facilities near their home residency (3%).

Although continued involvement at an elite level was an indication of better long term adjustment, athletes who were required to make choices regarding their future career prospects, did suffer from stress associated with that decision-making process, as illustrated by these comments:
I suppose emotionally I was being pulled by, like my heart was being pulled back home, but then what was going to be the best thing for my basketball. So I think I found that a little bit tough in the weeks leading up to leaving the Institute. It was actually making the decision on who you’re going to play for. I know a lot of the basketballers that I’ve spoken to, that have come out of the Institute, actually find that the toughest, choosing where they’re going, who are they going to play for, and what’s going to be best for them. So it’s that decision-making process about the future. (Female – Basketball)

The common themes associated with negative transition reactions and an athlete’s non-involvement in their sport, were feelings of disappointment at not achieving goals, or ongoing resentment relating to the circumstances surrounding their sporting career, as these two examples illustrate:

To this day though, the largest regret of my life that I have problems dealing with, is that I didn’t maintain training, and that I didn’t go to the Olympics. (Female – Gymnastics)
Although I do not blame my parents or the coaches, I do feel some anger to the sport in general. I know that I am actually one of the lucky ones as I achieved my goal to compete at the Olympics. However, there are many girls who don’t, and I know of many with various problems resulting from the way they were treated as a gymnast. This makes me feel quite sad.

(Female – Gymnastics)

Choices between employment and academia were varied for the sample, as illustrated in Figure 14. ‘Other’ options provided in Figure 14 indicate athletes who participated in a mixture of work/academia/sport.

*Figure 14.* Employment and academic choices during the transition period (N = 39)
No pattern was evident in terms of the relationship between choice of employment and academia during the transition, with only three athletes making choices that were not the preferred option. The majority of athletes made a choice to either work or study in sport-related fields due to their previous experiences as athletes. Only one athlete took up university study in preference to continuing in her chosen sport because she felt she had no other option, with the remaining two athletes making choices for financial reasons.

Although the majority of athletes did not indicate that choices relating to academia and work were directly related to their experiences at the residential program, one lower order theme that clearly emerge from the interview process was that the quality of education received was very much dependent on the motivation and goals of the individual athlete. Athletes and parents described a number of barriers that influenced the level of success achieved in education whilst at the Institute, including a singular focus on an elite sporting career, fatigue associated with training and competition demands, and athletes selecting easy subjects or reduced workloads to accommodate sport demands:

It suffered big time (education), and in some ways I do regret it....It was very hard in Year 12. I had a very hard time still catching up from Year 10. I missed out on two years. I did two years correspondence through Worlds and Olympics. I missed out on a lot of school. Missed out on the basics. I didn’t even really know what trigonometry was!

(Female – Gymnastics)
There were career advisors there at the time, not that I utilized them at all. I think it all comes back to your primary objective and goal while you’re there. You’re not there to go to school. Your objective is to play soccer, and obviously you expected to be a soccer player after you come out of the Institute and pursue it professionally; whether it be here in Australia, which I doubt very much; or whether it would be overseas, which is probably the ultimate goal for any player that’s there at the moment. So school is subsequently an event, or a participation, that is outside the primary goal, which is soccer.

(Male – Soccer)

It was pretty hard, because school was hard because you’d missed so much work. And you didn’t really take it seriously. We didn’t take it seriously at all. I’d get so tired. I would nearly fall asleep in classes constantly because I was so tired... It wasn’t taken seriously at all. You were so tired that you just didn’t want to. It was too much, and you don’t really think, when you’re there you think you’re going to be a tennis player. You don’t think that you’re going to need it. You hope that you don’t need it.

(Female – Tennis)
I loved the Institute. I think for your sports it’s the best place to be. But as far as education is concerned it really does suffer. I found it hard to study and also train very hard. Something had to give, and it was my schooling. Not in a bad way, but I know I could have done better. That’s just the way I see it. And when I was there I know a lot of people that were doing the same, and the people who were putting school first suffered in their sport. That’s what I thought anyway!!!

(Male – Basketball)

They do tend to put other life things on hold while they are here and while there is a strong educational and vocational component, they are still probably a year or two behind in some areas. While they spend a number of years focused on their sport they are developing other skills, but they are still not developing living skills at the same rate as others. (Quote from AIS Houseparent as cited in Scholes, 1998, p.10).
Five of the athletes interviewed, who did not go on to participate in full-time sport careers, initially felt disadvantaged by the quality of their education because they perceived that it put them further behind their non-athletic peers in terms of career opportunities. However, in the post-transition period these athletes generally expressed that they were not disappointed that they had participated in the program, even at the expense of their education or careers:

I’m very proud that I went, and happy that I went. There is no way I would ever change that. I loved it. I thought it was really good. Not many get the chance to do that, and a lot of people really look up to people who’ve done that sort of thing. But it did put my career off for a bit, which really doesn’t bother me. I’ve only just started working (at 23 years of age), and I’m sort of junior to a guy who’s two years younger than me, but that doesn’t really bother me because I’m still very sports minded.

(Male – Waterpolo)

Although post-transition these athletes generally appeared to be satisfied with the career or academic choices they made during the transition process, one father contemplated what the long-term impact might be:
Now looking back, she really could have finished the VCE. Could have gone to university, and could be now out in the workforce with a good job. But then again, perhaps not. She might have gotten a great degree, and can't find the job that she wants. I don't know. In five years time we'll consider whether we have regrets about those years at the AIS.

*Impact of the Event*

All athletes experienced a moderate impact in terms of the number of physical, psychological, and social changes experienced during the transition ($Min = 6$, $Max = 14$, $M = 10.50$, $SD = 1.82$), but no relationship was found between the impact of the event and transition reaction $r (39) = -0.19$, $p > 0.05$. Although athletes may have had a similar amount of changes occurring as a result of the transition event, the nature of the impact varied widely, indicating that the nature of the changes was of greater relevance than the actual number of changes occurring.

In relation to specific physical, behavioural and social changes that occurred during the transition event, Figure 15 illustrates that athletes who experienced a negative reaction were more likely to experience changes in
dietary patterns during the transition than those who experienced and indifferent or positive reaction:

![Bar chart showing changes in dietary habits](chart.png)

**Changes in Dietary Habits**

*Figure 15.* Changes in dietary habits during the transition period (*N* = 39)

In relation to training demands, the majority of athletes (72%) experienced a decrease in training demands during the transition period, as illustrated in Figure 16, with no apparent association evident between transition reaction and changes to training regimes.
One impact of reduced training regimes for the majority of athletes was a noticeable increase in the amount of time available to sleep, socialise and relax, with both negative and positive reactions associated with relatively equitable increases in these areas, as illustrated in Figure 17:

*Figure 16.* Changes to training regimes during the transition period \((N = 39)\)

*Figure 17.* Changes to sleep, relaxation and social patterns during the transition \((N = 39)\)
Although the majority of athletes indicated that they had more time to socialise (77%), one theme that clearly emerged between those who had negative and positive reactions, was the availability of social networks. Athletes who appeared to experience the least social impact during the transition, were those that had maintained social networks outside of the Institute environment:

Yeah, it was good because I could come back and just catch back up with all my friends again because I was keeping in contact with them. So it was really easy. But then again, when I left the Institute it was almost as hard as when I left to go over there. (Male – Waterpolo)

In contrast, those that experienced greater social impact were those that returned to the family home and had lost contact with friends from that environment, athletes who had to create new friendships in a unique environment, and athletes who had thrived in the atmosphere of the AIS:

The transition from a residential programme to normality is a very lonely, confusing time. You go from living with a group of mates who you share a common goal with, to a family who supports you but doesn’t fully understand. It’s not only the sport, it’s the camaraderie, the laughs, the enjoyment of respecting and being respected for being a person and a soccer player.
Oh yeah, I got really depressed because it was like ‘well now I’ve got to make friends back here in Adelaide’, and because I’d severed some of those because I’d been up there for so long (at AIS). ... You come home and you’re thinking that it’s going to be the same, but they’ve all dispersed and gone into all different groups, and you’re like, ‘well I don’t want to offend those people if I go and hang out with those people, and I don’t want to offend them’. So it was really difficult on which group to actually join, and I suppose now I’ve got a whole different group of friends. (Female – Basketball)

I don’t think that there was a lot of difficulty adjusting back into the family life. I think into the greater community probably, because he’d lost the ties, or lost those daily relationships.

(Mother – Male Golfer)
With regard to emotional reactions and behaviours, Table 1 illustrates the increasingly negative impact over time for those athletes who experienced difficult transitions, in comparison to those athletes who had more positive adaptations.

Table 1

*Total Number of Negative and Positive Emotional and Behavioural Reactions Experienced During the Twelve Months Following the Transition Event*

(N = 39)

<table>
<thead>
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*Transition Reaction Score*
Athletes who experienced slight negative reactions experienced a much more rapid decline in negative indicators over the twelve month period compared to those athletes who experienced moderate or severe reactions. Of some significance is the fact that athletes who experienced the most prolonged adjustment periods, actually exhibited a pronounced increase in negative indicators at a time when other athletes were experiencing a decrease. In relation to those athletes who experienced a mild positive reaction to the event, the impact on emotions and behaviours dropped rapidly after the first month. In contrast, those who had a moderately positive reaction continued to experience a positive impact throughout the twelve month period following the event.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the nature of the emotional, behavioural and psychological impact of the event and the how changes developed over time, exploration of the transition process provides some insight into the antecedents and course of the changes experienced by the athletes in this sample.
Chapter 12

Results

The Transition Process

The results of this study indicated that the majority of athletes were able to effectively disengage from their pre-transition roles and environment, and begin a new life organisation within three months of the onset of the event, as illustrated in Figure 18. The remaining athletes generally achieved adaptation within twelve months, but for three athletes the beginning of a new life organisation took between two to three years.

Figure 18. Length of time required for adaptation to a new life organisation ($N = 39$)
Endings

The qualitative and quantitative results clearly indicated three types of endings associated with the transition process. Bridges (1980, 1986) theory assumes that an ending will result in disengagement and disidentification from pre-transition roles and identities, and that disenchantment may occur as a result. However, the model does not provide further differentiation in relation to the types of endings experienced. The results of this study indicate that endings may be more complex than Bridges (1980, 1986) model suggests.

Endings appeared to differ with respect to the disengagement and disidentification process, with athletes experiencing quite varying reactions to their situations that could not be adequately described within the existing model framework. As a consequence, transition endings were further differentiated into three categories, namely Uneventful, Challenging and Problematic experiences. Categorisation was determined by the researcher based upon the data obtained from both quantitative and qualitative measures.

The first type of ending can be best described as Uneventful. Athletes categorised as having Uneventful endings experienced either an indifferent or positive reaction, to the transition event. They were characterised by immediate adaptation into their post-residency roles and environments, with no difficulty disengaging from previous roles and the Institute environment.

No evidence was found of any behaviours, emotions or thought processes associated with the neutral zone, or indications that these athletes
underwent a ‘discovery’ phase. They generally described the transition event as either a ‘non-event’ in which nothing really changed for them, or an easy and enjoyable transition back into a familiar environment, as illustrated by the comments of one male athlete:

I had no trouble adapting back to living at home.
Thoroughly enjoyed having spare time, going out with friends, and not having to train. Also enjoyed getting sleep! ...Nothing was stressful – everything I did was easier than the training that I was doing.

The second type of ending involved athletes who experienced predominantly positive reactions to the event, but who also encountered a number of stressors that required them to make adaptations, as illustrated in Table 2. For these athletes the ending could best be described as Challenging, with reactions to the process involving issues relating to disengagement from the pre-transition environment, and adapting to the challenges presented in their post-residency environment or roles.
Table 2

*Psychological Indicators for the Challenging Group at One Month and Three to Six Month Periods (N = 8)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Indicators First Month</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Psychological Indicators Three to Six Months</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trembling</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprehension</td>
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<td>Depressed mood</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edginess</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mood swings</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive worry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Apprehension</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed mood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Trembling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor concentration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Loss of interest in sport</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue/tiredness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Loss of interest in other activities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoided thinking about the future</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor concentration</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of inadequacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Avoided family/friends</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procrastination</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Avoided thinking about the future</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of inadequacy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Procrastination</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased pleasure</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hope for the future</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfying sleep</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Satisfying sleep</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased motivation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewed interest in sport</td>
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<td>More relaxed</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased energy</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Renewed interest in sport</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope for the future</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feelings of satisfaction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contentment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Made plans for the future</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Relief</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Contentment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More relaxed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Increased energy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased interest in non-sport activity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Renewed interest in non-sport activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved memory</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made plans for the future</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Increased motivation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of satisfaction</td>
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<td>Elation</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Positive thoughts</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elation</td>
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<td>Reduced irritability</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced irritability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Better concentration</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive thoughts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three main themes were evident in the responses provided by athletes and parents in the *Challenging* group, with one dominant theme being a willingness and desire to move onto challenges associated with new roles:

So his transition back into life after the scholarship was an easier one for him than a lot of other kids who have gone to the various places around the state...because that link was still there with his sport....He was keen to really put into practice what he'd learnt in theory. And that was sort of the fact that he did have something he looked forward to rather than ‘oh I didn’t get much out of that down there’, or ‘they’ve changed my swing and they’ve ruined my game, I’ve wasted 12 months’. They were some of the feelings expressed by some of the family and actual participants, where that wasn’t how X. felt...just speaking to other kids, they’re still not settled. He’s moved on and he’s been very fortunate in so many ways. (Mother – Male Golfer)

Although the *Challenging* group experienced positive reactions overall, they were still susceptible to some difficulties associated with disengagement from the pre-transition environment, sadness associated with the separation
from Institute friends due to relocation, and apprehension about the future. One of the differences that was evident between this group of individuals, and those who experienced more difficult transitions, was the relatively short period of time which existed between the onset of the event and acceptance of the changes required:

In that two weeks I let everything slide” (period of time between finding out the scholarship would not be renewed, and actually leaving the residency). “I would be in my room ‘til about four o’clock in the morning just lying there, and wake up at six. For two weeks I was a zombie, because I just didn’t know what to do. Then I finally settled down…. I knew there was nothing that I could do, I had to adjust to it. Probably when I thought about saying I’m not going back (to AIS), then it made it a bit easier. (Male – Basketball)

But it was kind of mixed I guess. There were so many people in Canberra (AIS) that we knew and loved, and a lot of them were staying there. Some sports obviously left, but a lot of our friends were still there, and that was awful having to say goodbye. It was really weird, such a strange kind of feeling because
you knew you were never going to see them, and you knew everything was going to be different. It was changed. But I was glad to be able to be out and do my own thing, being in control of what you’re actually doing. (Female – Tennis)

The final issue that caused some difficulties for the Challenging group, was the difficulty experienced by some athletes who had to adapt to the routines and rules of the family unit after the independent lifestyle experienced at the Institute:

The biggest problem being that I was used to being on my own, no hassles, no-one telling me what to do, when to do it. Not having people in my room etc. At home, you are back with parents who also need to adjust to having you back....I was very touchy with everyone because if someone asked me a question or simply came into my room, then I’d think they were checking up on me. (Male – Soccer)
It was a tough time originally as your whole life gets turned upside down. I made great friends in Canberra, and when you get taken away from them, I felt very empty. Bored. I still had friends at home, but the bond of the other athletes is great. I grew up a lot in those two years, independently and socially, self-confidence...Really the freedom in Canberra was something I missed...I went through a stage where I missed my friends which built up tension, and everything then seemed very business like. We had a lot of fun at the AIS but I guess you have to face reality some time. I was kind of scared heading onto the circuit and very unsure of what the future held. I did a lot of thinking in those few months, and I was a little stressed out. Once I socially adapted back home things were fine. I found my feet and a set routine, and then felt comfortable again. Before I knew it, I was away travelling overseas with other tennis players, so I felt content with that. (Female – Tennis)
It took me a little while to realise that, hey, he has been away from home and he hasn’t had to answer to anybody. But they had set times and that down there (at AIS), and they just went along with that. And they had to be back in by a certain time, and they did that. Well sometimes!! But he wasn’t used to somebody coming to him and saying ‘well where are you going, you have to back in by 10 o’clock, now you be here’. And I wasn’t coming across as forceful as that, but he just wasn’t used to people checking up on him. And it wasn’t even checking up on him, it was just something I have done for years, and he had come back into it. And it was ‘okay, your back in this family and we just go along’. And he wasn’t used to that, he’d gotten out of that. (Mother – Male Soccer Player)

I guess the hardest thing for my parents too, was that I went away as a 17 year old and came back as an 18 year old. So it was pretty tough for them because I was legal age and I wanted to do all this sort of stuff. (Male – Basketball)

NB: *In Australia the legal age for entry into licensed premises and consumption of alcohol is 18 years of age.*
The experiences of four of the athletes in the *Challenging* group provided some evidence of the time-out and reflection activities described in Bridges Neutral Zone. These athletes did not experience the disorientation, disenchantment or identity issues generally associated with the Neutral Zone, but they clearly experienced a short period of time where they contemplated issues associated with their new roles and environmental demands, as illustrated by the previous examples. The discovery process, the final phase before commencement of a new beginning, was evident within a short period of time (one to three months) following the onset of the transition, and was characterised by comments indicating an acceptance and incorporation of the new roles and challenges.

The third type of ending found in this sample involved athletes who experienced varying degrees of difficulty over more prolonged periods of time. This group can best be described as experiencing endings that were *Problematic*, with difficulties arising from disengagement, disorientation, and disenchantment. These athletes generally experienced negative psychological reactions to the transition event, as indicated in Table 3, which continued to exist for periods of up to twelve months. For three individuals the reactions persisted for a further two to three years.

The athletes indicated experiencing more negative psychological reactions over a longer period of time than their counterparts in the *Challenging* group, in particular the persistence of depressed mood for more than half of the
group. Only a modicum of positive psychological reactions were indicated in
the first six months following the transition event, with real improvement not
evident until the six to twelve month period when a corresponding drop in
negative reactions occurred.

Table 3

*Psychological Indicators for the Problematic Group at One Month, Three to Six
Month, and Six to Twelve Month Periods (N = 18)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Indicators First Month</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Psychological Indicators Three to Six Months</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Psychological Indicators 6-12 Months</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprehension</td>
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<td>Depressed mood</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Depressed mood</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Feelings of worthlessness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Loss interest in sport</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Feelings of helplessness</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Poor concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mood swings</td>
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<td>Mood swings</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Feelings of guilt</td>
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<td>Boredom</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Feelings of inadequacy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feelings of helplessness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Apprehension</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of helplessness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Unsatisfying sleep</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss interest other activit.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Crying</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor concentration</td>
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<td>Edginess</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excessive worry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Crying</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Loss interest in sport</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood swings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feelings of shame</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Poor concentration</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excessive worry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Unsatisfying sleep</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue/tiredness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Loss interest in sport</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inability to sleep</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of guilt</td>
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<td>Poor concentration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inability to sleep</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Unsatisfying sleep</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Feelings of shame</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid thinking of future</td>
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<td>Avoid thinking of future</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Emotional unavailability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feelings of shame</td>
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<td>Procrastination</td>
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<td>Emotional unavailability</td>
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<td>Loss interest other activit.</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoided family/friends</td>
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<td>Lack of pleasure</td>
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<td>Emotional unavailability</td>
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<td>Edginess</td>
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<td>Fatigue/tiredness</td>
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<td>Emotional unavailability</td>
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<td>Trembling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Emotional unavailability</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Continued

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Table 3 Continued

*Psychological Indicators for the Problematic Group at One Month, Three to Six Month, and Six to Twelve Month Periods (N = 18)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Indicators First Month</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Psychological Indicators Three to Six Months</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Psychological Indicators 6-12 Months</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>More energy</td>
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<td>Renewed interest in sport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renewed interest in sport</td>
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<td>Renew interest other activi.</td>
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<td>Positive thoughts</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Made plans for the future</td>
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<td>Pride</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of satisfaction</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Increased energy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relief</td>
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<td>Contentment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope for the future</td>
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<td>Satisfying sleep</td>
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<td>Increased motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfying sleep</td>
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<td>Better concentration</td>
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<td>Renew interest other activi.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased motivation</td>
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<td>Positive thoughts</td>
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<td>Feelings of satisfaction</td>
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<td>Improved memory</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Pride</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Reduced irritability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elation</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vigor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One particularly important feature of *Problematic* reactions was the longer period of time before athletes began to look ahead. Only 56% of athletes indicated that they began to make plans for the future at the six to twelve month period, in comparison to 63% of athletes in the *Challenging* group who had reached this phase by the three to six month phase. The qualitative responses of athletes in the *Problematic* group provided further evidence of an array of issues that caused distress during the adaptation phase:

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• Difficulty adjusting to their environment, both athletes who returned to the family home and those who moved to a new environment (83%)
• Feeling scared, lost or uncertain about the future (44%);
• Feeling lonely (44%) and not wanting to talk about their experiences with anyone (39%);
• Difficulty making friends in the transition environment, both athletes who returned to the family home, and those who moved to a new environment (28%);
• Boredom and frustration from having too much extra time because of a reduction in training demands (28%);
• Feeling very depressed (22%), angry (22%) or upset (22%) as a result of injury, ill health, or social difficulties;
• Lacking motivation and withdrawing from sport and day to day activities (22%);
• Resentment relating to the circumstances of the transition (17%);
• Disappointment at failing to achieve goals (11%).

The experiences of these athletes were generally representative of the type of responses described in Bridges Neutral Zone, and as such are best illustrated by exploring the different facets of the process associated with this transition stage.
The Neutral Zone

One common theme that was associated with the disengagement process itself, particularly for those in the Problematic group, was a greater degree of distress associated with separation from the pre-transition environment. Athletes who enjoyed their time at the Institute typically expressed how difficult it was to leave the residential lifestyle, whether it was the facilities, familiarity with the environment, or friendships formed whilst in residency. They commonly reminisced about their time at the Institute, and indicated a desire to relive their experiences. During this reminiscing phase athletes typically engaged in solitary behaviour, with the majority indicating that the time was spent reflecting on what they had achieved and experienced. They were generally reticent to share their thoughts and feelings with others during this time, and indicated a preference for dealing with the disengagement process without the assistance of others.

Just to break away from the place. To break away from the room, the bed, the fridge, the TV, the view; just the residence, the food hall, everything. Just to break away from it was just really hard....I would have loved to have flown back up, if I had the chance I’d have gone back for a weekend with the boys. (Male – Soccer)
I did have withdrawal symptoms for a while. I wanted to go back. I probably still have them now. But they decreased once time started to pass.

(Female – Basketball)

I suppose the decision not to go to England was stressful for everybody because it was something he wanted to do since he was four. And then when he was all set to go and he changed his mind, but then that was his decision and we stood by him. Then he went through that, sit at home, and I started to worry then. Just as a mother, I suppose. You can’t sit at home and just let your life go by, and because he hadn’t had contact up here with any mates, all the school guys had gone, he had one or two, but he didn’t even have a lot of contact with them for a while. And he still wanted to be in contact with the guys in Canberra (AIS). So he tended to go down there for the weekend a bit, or see them if they came up here, and I think that was just, you had to break those ties. It might have been different if they all had have left at the same time and all came home. But that was concerning me because I’m thinking well his life’s up here now, but he really wants it to be down there, and it can’t be down there.

(Mother – Male soccer player)
You just come home and straight away they’re (parents) asking you thousands of questions, and like ‘I don’t want to talk about it now. I’ll let you know when I’m ready to talk about it’… I felt bad saying it because they’re my parents. So I actually felt bad saying ‘I don’t want to talk to you now, you know. ‘Don’t take it personally, it’s just the way I feel right now. So it could be tomorrow, it could be next week, could be a couple of months before I’m ready to talk about it. You’ve just got to be patient with me’.(Male – Soccer)

One significant finding in this study was that athletes who experienced moderate or very negative reactions to the transition event typically described emotions and behaviours consistent with disenchantment, disorientation, and disintegration described by Bridges (1980, 1986). Feelings of loss, inadequacy, confusion, anger, resentment, disillusionment and uncertainty were common themes for this group, with the Neutral Zone lasting for periods ranging anywhere from six months to three years. The following examples of different athlete experiences provide some illuminating insight into the various manifestations of the Neutral Zone:
There is no better way to describe it as, when you’re up there (at AIS) it’s more a metaphoric life that you think about and you say geez it’s a fantasy, its something from a book. When you come back home it’s reality. It’s actually reality to come back (to home), and think geez this is something I’ve been away from for two years. I’m back here now and it’s time to position myself, not only for today, for the future. And it’s a real reality check...I don’t think mine was boredom (reaction to event), but more resent. Resent being that I’m here alone, not having any other friends to actually be a companion through the transition. The transition is there. It’s inevitable, and it’s going to happen. But the way it happened, me coming here and not knowing anyone within the vicinity of maybe 10 kilometres. Not knowing anyone. And it was a difficult thing to do. But I wasn’t struck by boredom. I was struck by resentment. I hated being here at that time, and I think a lot of that resentment was then conveyed or transferred through to my parents. They could feel it, and relatives and so forth. I didn’t enjoy relatives being here. I didn’t enjoy being in discussion or being around relatives. It was a time in my life that was quite difficult. (Male – Soccer)
For me the transition period was a rollercoaster ride of ups and downs, and the ups tended to be pretty few and far between. I cried a lot at first, and that lasted for a while. Times at the AIS were sometimes really good and at other times really really bad. Initially on leaving, all I could think of were the good things – the fun times, the successes, the laughs, the wonderful friends I’d made, and the wonderful experiences we’d shared. So much had happened in two years, and all of a sudden it was over. What made things harder was that we’d just won the WNBL title, we were National Champions. It was so special. I look at the photos and I get tears. I still can’t bring myself to watch the tape of the game. And I don’t think I’ll realise exactly how special it was until I get older. I suppose after finishing on such an incredible high a low had to be expected. I felt so lonely. I spent the days by myself. My brothers were at school, my parents at work, and my old school friends at Uni. I don’t think I wanted them around, I preferred to wallow in my pit of despair alone. I don’t remember what I did all day long... I wasn’t getting on with anyone at home. I was sad, I was depressed, I wasn’t training, and my girlfriends were a million miles away. At the time of leaving I didn’t
have a team to go to...I hated this fact, and it ate away at my confidence ...I came close to giving the game away a number of times there, but the phase always passes and I'm still here...I think it took close to all my positive energy to stay on top of things during that time. It's been more than nine months since leaving the AIS, and things are a whole lot better...It's weird now, and reading over this I feel a little stupid. You'd think I was grieving over the death of a loved one or recovering from a stroke, not moving house!! But honestly, at the time, it seemed like the hardest thing in the world. (Female – Basketball)

The hardest thing I guess was when I returned home. Suddenly I was suppose to be normal like other kids, but the truth is I was different. There was no support at all, I felt used in a way. Now that I was not training the sport didn’t give a shit about me. There was no assistance in helping me figure out what I wanted to do and once home again I felt like nobody would really understand where I was coming from anyway...I kept quiet really, and just went along feeling quite unhappy and confused. After having trained 40 hours per week for the past four years and also attend school, I suddenly had so much time.
I didn’t continue with any sport, and found I achieved a lot less with all this time I now had. I got less done now in terms of schoolwork etc than when I was a gymnast. By the end of the first year after retirement I started smoking marijuana. Since then I have progressively increased my habit. Now years later I have been a regular user of all drugs as some point. One of the reasons I loved drugs so much, especially speed and ecstasy, was that for the time I was using I did not think about food....Drugs was a good escape route, but eventually they didn’t help. I realised that my problems were still there after I came off the drugs, more so than ever. Having been bulimic for seven years, it being a daily occurrence for the past four years (sometimes 10-20 times per day). It had totally taken control of me. I had no life as my days were spent by myself consuming or getting rid of food. I could no longer study and my money was always wasted on either drugs or food....(professional help was then sought resulting in some resolution to the problems being experienced)...my bulimia has diminished tremendously (only 2 – 3 times week). Many issues were dealt with, mine stemming back to my gymnastics days. (Female - Gymnastics)
Probably the first three to five months were probably
the worst months of my life. I was playing soccer. I
was lucky I went straight from playing at the youth
level to the highest league in Australia, which is the
national soccer league. So I was lucky in that sense
that I could continue my soccer. I got into uni, and at
least I had that ahead of me. But, it was just a whole
heap of things missing in my life. The training every
night was missing, all the boys were missing, the
coach was missing, the food hall. Things were
missing, and it took me a while to get used to that and
just to re-adjust to the home environment. And I pretty
much think I got over that okay. But the thing that I
couldn’t get over was the fact that here I am at home
and my parents don’t know who I am. They couldn’t
understand how I approached things, why I do that. So
I thought, ‘Shit, I’ve come home and I’ve got no
bloody parents as well!’, and then no friends as well.
So I thought, ‘shit, this is hard!!

(Male – Soccer)
Following a year full of injury – when I left the AIS, most of what I had worked for had been taken away, which left me kind of lost. I had no direction, no ambition, and no motivation. I was 16, and due to the differences within the education systems of Victoria and the ACT, I had to repeat a year. That put me a year behind all of my friends, so I moved schools. That was probably one of the worst things I could’ve done. I became withdrawn and really angry. I had trouble fitting back in with old friends, and trouble making new ones. My family did what they could to help, but the more they tried, the more resentful I became. I became really sad and my health began to suffer. Within six months of returning home I became too ill to continue playing sport, which looking back, contributed to my poor state of mind. I’m not sure that at that point, anyone could’ve done anything to help. (Female – Basketball)

When I left the Institute my initial feelings was of sadness and uncertainty. I left for Scotland three weeks after leaving the Institute. I had gone from the Institute where I was surrounded by good friends and good times, to a miserable city where I didn’t know anybody. I lost most of the discipline I had before. I didn’t stretch, lost motivation and wasn’t interested. (Male – Soccer)
I felt ‘bloody awful’. Was carrying excess weight and I didn’t have a club wanting to take me, and I didn’t know if I still wanted to play. I though my only option was to go home and go to university. I felt really upset with myself that I couldn’t have done better and that I had really let my family down and most importantly I let myself down. I didn’t know where my life was going, and I felt by myself. Only after waking up to myself about six months after, did things start to turn around....Once I got my two feet on the ground six months later, things felt less stressful and chaotic. Till then I didn’t think things would turn out for the better. Confidence was down and my self esteem was at an all time low.

(Female - Basketball)
Beginnings

All of the athletes in the Challenging and Problematic groups ultimately experienced a new beginning, with even the most difficult transitions being marked by a final acceptance and move toward integration of new roles and circumstances.

A new beginning was generally evident once the athlete had achieved a level of contentment with their sport, career or academic commitments, developed and sustained stable and fulfilling social relationships, and was comfortable with the demands and nature of the post-transition environment, as illustrated by these comments:

I greatly value the lessons and the time spent at the residential institution, and believe that it provided me with opportunities that I would never have received without taking part in such a program. Not only the lessons, but the great friends and people that you create life long bonds with because of your experiences together. (Female – Basketball)
It’s only probably in the last year, maybe year and a half that I’ve started thinking, ‘geez, I’d better get on with my life’, start trying to get a job and stuff like that. (Male – Waterpolo)

I felt it was six months until I was happy that I’d actually made the right decision. I had a great group of friends and I didn’t think about life at the Institute anymore. I’d forgotten about that….one thing our coach always said to us was never regret doing things or not doing things. So when I was up there (at AIS) I didn’t ever regret anything, and so I think that’s what made it a lot easier for me to make that transition. I’d finished that stage of my life. I’d done everything. I got everything I could possibly get out of it, and so now it’s time to put it into place. Like, now it’s sort of the real test. That was the practice. This is the test to see how things are going.

(Female – Basketball).
Even athletes who had quite difficult transitions, generally found some form of resolution to the issues encountered during the process, as illustrated by the comments of the female basketballer who felt ‘bloody awful’ during Neutral Zone phase:

Spending two years at the Institute of Sport was a very positive experience in that it was the opportunity for me to grow and mature and to be able to fend for myself. Things turned out the way they did for a reason and I have no regrets. I’m happy with my life, and my time at the AIS was part of a stepping stone to where I am now. Sure I would have been happy to have played on a national league team, but that was the past. I feel more positive and happy with myself now, and that’s the way I like it.

All of the athletes in the sample have ultimately moved on to new life organisations in a practical sense. However, the experiences of one athlete clearly indicate that where a transition process is marked by prolonged and difficult adaptation, the emotional impact may be more long term and persistent:
I regret the last three years (period of the transition process). I blew it. I shouldn’t have blown it. It was my time. I had the time, and for me personally I’ve blown it, and I regret that. That’s why I suppose in a way I’m trying to make up for it now. I want to get back into studying, and I want to do uni next year, and I’m trying to get some money so I can go overseas and sort of stuff like that. But I’m also doing a traineeship now, and I might go to uni say in two years. I still want to do that, but I regret not doing it then... I have to wait, and I don’t like that. I had the chance and I’ve blown it. To me second chances aren’t good enough. You get one chance and that’s it. That’s an Olympic Games. See that’s the thing, I still refer to some things in my life like it’s the Olympics, you only get one chance!! (Female – Gymnastics)

Examination of athlete experiences associated with the transition process, unmistakably indicated a difference in the way athletes adapted to the changes associated with the transition event. Athletes who had no difficulty adapting to changes in their living arrangements, career/academic pursuits, or
social functioning, were clearly advantaged by the quick nature of their transitions. In contrast, athletes who experienced ‘problematic’ transitions suffered from higher levels of stress related symptoms, indicated more difficulties associated with social networks and adaptation to living arrangements, and in a small number of cases, suffered quite devastating reactions.

Although examination of the transition process provides an insight into the stages of change that athletes experienced, it does not sufficiently explain why athletes in the Uneventful and Challenging groups were able to achieve more effective transitions than those in the Problematic group. One of the key areas that is likely to be related to the differences associated with the process of adaptation, is the type of resources available to the athlete during the transition, and whether those resources assisted or hindered the athlete to adapt to the changes being experienced.
Chapter 13

Results

Potential Resources – The 4S’s

The results of this study indicated a number of variables that either assisted or hindered the transition process. Athletes whose perceptions about the situation were positive in nature, were more likely to experience a positive reaction to the event itself. Positive reactions were also more likely to be experienced if an athlete was in good health, had moderate to high levels of self-esteem, a stable emotional state, and was conversant with the use of mental skills. Having a social support network available during the transition was also found to be a significant asset, as was the use of multiple and varied coping strategies to deal with the changes being experienced.

In contrast, variables likely to hinder the transition process were negative perceptions of the situation, emotional autonomy associated with isolation from support networks, low self-esteem, poor perceptions of emotional stability, guilt or disappointment regarding perceived obligations to others, disruption of social networks, and a failure to engage in multiple and varied coping strategies.
The Situation

Onset of the Event

In relation to the onset of the event, 14 (36%) athletes perceived that the event occurred suddenly, 5 (13%) believed that the event was somewhat sudden, and the remaining 20 athletes (51%) indicated the event was not sudden. No relationship was found between the onset of the event and transition reaction \( r (39) = .02, \ p > .05 \). However, a low correlation was found between the onset of the event and how prepared the athlete was to deal with the change \( r (39) = - .35, \ p < .05 \), indicating that a sudden event may be related to lower levels of perceived ability to cope with the changes required. Sudden events in this sample were related to injury, organisational decisions, or offers of professional contracts. No evidence was found that a negative sudden event was more likely to result in adaptation difficulties than positive sudden events such as a professional contract offer.

The majority of athletes \( (n = 21, 54\%) \) felt that they were prepared to deal with the change when it occurred, a further ten (26%) felt that maybe they were prepared, and only eight athletes (21%) felt unprepared. A moderate correlation was found between perceptions of preparation and the transition reaction \( r (39) = - .57, \ p < .001 \), and preparation and happiness about leaving the residency \( r (39) = .49, \ p < .01 \). These results indicate that feeling unprepared to deal with the change was more likely to be associated with a negative transition, whereas those who were prepared were generally happier.
about the transition and therefore more likely to experience a positive reaction to the event.

Desirability of the Change

The majority of athletes were happy about leaving the residential program \((n = 20, 51\%)\), with a further ten \((26\%)\) maybe feeling happy about it, and only nine \((23\%)\) indicating they were not happy to leave. A moderate correlation was found between the desirability of the event and transition reaction \(r (39) = -.42, \ p < .01\), indicating that those who were not happy about the change were more likely to experience a negative reaction to the event. The common theme amongst those who were somewhat happy about leaving the Institute was a desire to move on to the next stage of their life, but also a sadness at having to leave the Institute environment and friends, as illustrated by the comments of one male soccer player:

Leaving the Institute for me was not a real stressful time. I had been down there 18 months, and I knew it was time to move on. The 18 months I had down there was probably the best time of my life, but leaving was not a big thing. I was sad to leave and I missed the whole experience, but I knew I would see my old friends from home and my family more, who I had also missed a lot while I was at the Institute.
In contrast, those who were not happy about the change didn’t want to leave the Institute lifestyle, were disappointed at not having completed their scholarship term, or were frustrated at not having achieved goals they had set for themselves:

When I left the AIS the only choice was to return back to Perth and live with my parents, and back to my old school. I hated every minute of it. In Canberra I had friends, enjoyed the college system of education, and felt good being around other athletes that were similar to me. It was very difficult to return home, especially being under parental guidance again.

In relation to those athletes who were happy about leaving the Institute, the dominant theme that emerged was an acceptance that their time at the Institute was completed, and a readiness to move on to other challenges. However, a lower order theme that was evident for athletes who were happy about leaving the Institute, but who subsequently stopped competing at the same level, was a desire to seek relief from the pressures associated with the training environment:
Did not enjoy the sport anymore. Did not even enjoy training (hated training actually). I did not have specific goals to strive for. I missed my family. Nagging injuries (could still train – but some things were painful). I didn’t have many good friends. (Male – Gymnastics)

Source of the Change

For 28 of the athletes the source of change was external in the form of specified scholarship termination dates, organisational decisions to terminate a scholarship due to injury, poor performance or organisational restructuring. The remaining 11 athletes entered the transition as a result of internal factors such as health problems, homesickness, or choosing a career option.

A Mann-Whitney U-Test indicated no significant difference between transition reactions for source of change $U = 1.49$, $p > .05$, with an internal source of change just as likely to be associated with a negative transition ($M = -1.00$, $SD = 1.79$) as an external source of change ($M = -.11$, $SD = 1.47$).

However, the pattern of transition reactions does indicate that injury or ill health was more likely to be associated with negative reactions, as illustrated in Table
4, with all five athletes exhibiting health problems experiencing a negative transition reaction.

Table 4

Transition Reaction and Source of Change (N = 39)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of change</th>
<th>Very Negative (n)</th>
<th>Moderate Negative (n)</th>
<th>Slightly Negative (n)</th>
<th>Indifferent Reaction (n)</th>
<th>Slightly Positive (n)</th>
<th>Moderate Positive (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship Complete (57%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach/organisation (15%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury or Illness (13%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional reasons (15%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The experiences of the athletes in this sample indicated that if the athlete willingly made the decision to leave because of frustration with ongoing injury problems, then they were less likely to have difficulty making the transition away from their sport. However, those who had the decision made for them due to coaching or medical advice, or an inability to perform due to injury or illness, exhibited higher levels of adaptation difficulties. Further support for this pattern was found in relation to whether athletes experienced any increase in physical
problems during the transition $U = 2.68, p < .01$, with those athletes suffering
from either ill health or injury problems more likely to experience a negative
reaction ($M = -1.60, SD = 1.58$), than those without any increase in physical
problems ($M = .07, SD = 1.39$).

*Role Change*

The majority of the athletes experienced some form of role change ($n =
27, 69\%$) by either becoming professional athletes, or leaving their sports and
beginning new career or academic pursuits. The remaining $31\%$ of athletes
continued to participate in their sport at the same level, and continued in their
academic or work commitments as occurred during the residency. Eighteen of
the athletes who experienced a role change, perceived the change as a gain, with
only nine describing the change as a loss, as illustrated in Figure 19:

![Graph](image-url)

*Figure 19.* Incidence of transition reactions for type of role change
experienced ($N = 39$)
As indicated in Figure 19, no clear pattern emerged in regard to role gain and transition experiences, with athletes just as likely to experience a positive or a negative transition reaction. Qualitative responses indicated that athletes who achieved a role gain, but had difficulty adjusting to the demands of the new role, had more difficult transitions than those who were able to adapt to the new demands.

The data did suggest a link between role loss and an increased likelihood of experiencing a negative reaction to the transition event. One lower order theme that emerged to support this proposition, was the disappointment associated with the loss of status and identification that came with being an elite athlete, as illustrated by these comments:

Not being treated as a ‘special’ individual like I was in Canberra took a while to adapt to. At school in Canberra we were all known as the AIS kids who were good at sport. When we walked through the shopping mall people would see the AIS jacket and say ‘wow, they must be really talented’. Even though I was still known as a gymnast at my home school, it wasn’t the same.

Still to this day it’s very difficult to actually accept the fact that I was once there (elite athlete), but not any longer. That’s certainly very difficult. (Male – soccer)


Duration of the Event

In all but two cases the duration of the event was permanent due to the conditions under which scholarships were completed or terminated. Athletes were aware of the finality of the situation, and as a consequence, the permanency of the event was not indicative of the type of reaction experienced. The two athletes for whom the duration was not permanent, were both young gymnasts who left the program due to coaching staff recommendations to return to the family unit, with the option to return at a later age if they wished to continue their gymnastics career. Both athletes experienced positive transition experiences back into the home environment, and were optimistic about their future opportunities in the sport.

Previous Experience With a Transition

All athletes in the sample had experienced a previous transition as a consequence of their move away from the family home into the residential program. No evidence was found of a relationship between how an athlete reacted to their transition into the residential environment, and their reaction after leaving the residency. Athletes who adapted well to the transition into the Institute were just as likely to have a negative transition reaction as a positive one, and the same was true for those who experienced difficulties adjusting to the Institute lifestyle. It was not possible to determine whether athletes actually
developed any specific skills during the previous transition that would have assisted or hindered them during the post-residency transition process.

The Self

Biological

Information provided by athletes and parents indicated no common themes relating to transition reactions and age or developmental status. No relationship was found between transition reaction and the age at which the athlete entered $r (39) = .08, p > .05$, or left the program $r (39) = -.01, p > .05$. With regard to physical health, a Mann-Whitney U-Test indicated a significant difference in transition reactions between those athletes who experienced increases in health-related problems and those who did not $U = 2.68, p < .01$, with 10 athletes experiencing an increase in ill health or injury problems. Those athletes who experienced an increase in health problems were more likely to experience a negative transition ($M = -1.60, SD = 1.58$) compared to those who experienced no problems ($M = .07, SD = 1.39$).

Of the five athletes who experienced a very negative transition, two male soccer players underwent surgery for injuries sustained as a result of their sport; one female gymnast experienced an increase in the severity of bulimia symptoms which had first become evident whilst involved in the residential program; a female basketball player developed chronic fatigue syndrome and later anorexia nervosa; and one female gymnast experienced problems with
anxiety. Other illnesses described by athletes who had less severe negative reactions included an increase in colds, headaches, and recurrence of injuries.

The experiences described by the athletes who suffered ill health or injury, clearly indicate the impact that health-related problems can have on the transition process, as illustrated by these comments of this soccer player who suffered a significant knee injury only weeks into his involvement with a National League team:

I’d never had such a major injury. It was the first time for me, and I just thought it would pass in the matter of a week, but it didn’t. So from me sustaining such a bad injury, it was totally unexpected. I really didn’t know how to deal with anything. It was disappointment. It was so disappointing. I don’t think I can find another word to describe it. It was just, and I don’t know how to explain it, but I know at the time, never having had an injury of that status, it really played a negative role in my life. And even coming back I was so pessimistic about everything....After regaining 80% of my confidence, it went again. So it was a sequence of events, and it was just disappointing. It was one thing after another. And it really contributed to me saying, ‘okay well, what else am I going to do in life’. Obviously realising that I’m not going to have a future career in soccer, that’s for sure, so you look at other options. Business was one of them.
In contrast, two gymnasts who experienced positive reactions to the transitions described some of the benefits associated with the reduction in physical demands:

When I got back home I was much happier. I ate comfortably, slept well and my health was back to normal (while I was there I had a skin problem, itchiness, probably related to stress). It was fantastic to be back to a place where I knew people, I felt comfortable and happy. (Female - Gymnastics)

I grew a hell of a lot – 15 cm in 3 months!! – that’s lots when I was only 144 cm to begin with. (Male - Gymnastics).

With regard to other physically related issues, athletes experiencing a negative transition were more likely to experience changes in dietary habits (as indicated in Chapter 10 - Impact of the Event). No differences were evident for negative and positive reactions with respect to sleep patterns, relaxation, or changes to training regimes.
Psychological

All of the athletes in the sample described close family ties, with no significant relationships found between transition reaction and the level of autonomy and attachment between parents and athletes (parental involvement and responsiveness for mother $r (39) = .20$, $p > .05$, and father $r (36) = .07$, $p > .05$; parent relations $r (39) = .22$, $p > .05$). However, significant relationships were found between parent attachment and involvement, and self-esteem and emotional stability, as illustrated in Table 5, indicating that those athletes who felt connected with their parents were more likely to feel good about themselves and experience less emotional distress.

Table 5

Relationship Between Parent/Child Relations and General Esteem and Emotional Stability ($N = 39$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parent Relations SDQIII [r]</th>
<th>Attachment Mother Father [r]</th>
<th>Involvement Mother Father [r]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stability</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>.48** .38*</td>
<td>.19  .35*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General esteem</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.53** .46**</td>
<td>.13  .49**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$**p < .01$, $*p < .05$
Closely related to the issue of attachment, is the development of adolescent autonomy. Fifteen athletes, and all of the parents interviewed, specifically referred to the substantial development towards independence as part of the residential experience. This independence was evident in terms of practical life skills, decision-making abilities, emotional needs, and coping strategies, and was considered by all to have had a long-term impact on the behaviour and attitudes of those involved:

She came back a different girl though. She’s always, as a little girl she was independent, but she came home very independent. In more ways grown up. So she’s never really been a little girl. Even though that experience was short, it has had a big impact on her life. (Mother of pre-adolescent gymnast)

I definitely think that I’m more confident. Much more confident now. Very independent... I think it’s just definitely made me a better person for the experience. (Female – Basketball)
This growth of independence generally assisted athletes in the pursuit of post-residency activities and adaptation. However, a dominant theme that emerged for those who established emotional independence from parents and experienced a negative transition, was a reticence to seek emotional support from parents during the transition process, as illustrated by the experiences of this male soccer player:

I think I learnt to be a lot more independent there. I learnt to deal with problems myself because you can’t, you’ve got 18 players in the team and a couple that are your good friends who sometimes you can turn to talk to, but other times you just can’t. And you don’t want to get on the phone to your parents because they will worry and they’ll be up the next day or the next weekend hassling you thinking there’s something wrong with you, or you’re sad, or something like that. So you learn to deal with it yourself. I never used to be like that, but ever since going that’s what developed, and I haven’t changed back. That’s what I’m like now. I find it hard to open up and talk to people sometimes because I like to deal with things myself.
A further consequence of this movement toward emotional autonomy, was the need for parents to cope during the transition period with the emotional changes their children had undergone whilst they were out of their care. In some cases the autonomy was acknowledged and incorporated into new patterns of parent/child interactions:

Being on his own, happy in his own company.
Whereas he used to be open with us, he doesn’t need to talk about his problems with us anymore.
He just deals with them however he wants. I don’t like that, but that’s the way it is.
(Mother – Male Soccer)

However, for other parent/s accepting the change was more difficult, and at times exacerbated the stress experienced by the athlete during the transition process:

...they didn’t know how to approach me and fix it (feeling depressed and wanting to spend time on my own during the transition). I’m sure if they were able to fix it they wouldn’t think it was too bad. But even still to this day, I can’t stand it. If
I'm pissed off and I want to be on my own, Mum comes in and 'argh!!' ...And then she thinks I've failed as a mum because my son's depressed. If she'd known, if someone had said to my mum 'well you have to understand when they come back they might be depressed and they might be lonely a bit because they're not used to it, but that doesn't mean you should smother them with care, understanding and love. You've just got to ease in to it and let them do what they want, sometimes pull them up, that kind of thing". You know, you see one of your kids depressed and you try and bombard them. That's what happens even now. (Male - Soccer)

Another important psychological construct to be considered was that of self-esteem, with a moderate relationship found between general levels of esteem and transition reactions $r (39) = .37, p < .05$, indicating that athletes with higher levels of self-esteem were less likely to experience negative reactions to the event. The potential for low self-esteem to impact on the adaptation process is well illustrated by the experiences of the following athletes:
Junior tennis champion Esther Knox entered the Australian Institute of Sport in 1992 as a normal teenager, but left two years later withdrawn, injury-riddled and stripped of the drive and determination needed to be the world's best...Chemist Rob Knox (father), was thrilled with her AIS selection but his jubilation soon turned to distress.... 'I took her out after two years. I had had enough at that stage'. Knox...said the experience totally undermined her confidence. She said she suffered from unhealthy eating habits and an extremely low body image. 'It affected my tennis because I started worrying about whether I looked fat while I was playing', she said. 'Even today my confidence isn't what it was when I was 13 years old. (Chappell & Callinan, 1998, p.6).

Feeling like a failure, and that I wasn’t strong enough to maintain the intense life at the AIS. When I returned home I felt like everyone saw me as a quitter, and they would always say ‘but why didn’t you stay there when you would have been at the Olympics? (Female – Gymnastics)
One female gymnast who had been in program for five years, left the program by choice following a difficult period. Her thoughts at that time provide some insight into the thinking processes associated with a low self-esteem when faced with the prospect of coping with a new school and social environment:

I was hopeless. No-one’s going to like me. I’m this. I’m that. I’m a bad person. I’m too angry. I used to say everything. No-one’s going to like me because I’m not in the group; or no-one’s going to like me because I’m not cool; or no-one’s going to like me because I don’t smoke; or no-one’s going to like me because I don’t drink; or no-one’s going to like me because I don’t hang out with the cool people. You know, that sort of stuff. That’s the sort of stuff I perceived down at the Institute that life was like, but it’s not. I thought it would be so easy to change, and it wasn’t.

On the topic of athletic identity, the level of identification with the athlete role was found to be unrelated to the reactions experienced during the transition using the original 10 item unidimensional AIMS scoring method. $r_{(39)} = -.02, p > .05$. Analysis using the revised unidimensional 7 item scoring
scale (Brewer & Cornelius, 2001) produced similar results $r (39) = .02, p > .05$. A strong one-tailed correlation ($r = .82, p < .05$) was found between the 10 item and 7 item scoring methods.

Athletes in the sample predominantly exhibited moderate to high levels of athletic identity, but evidence of identity foreclosure was only found for one female gymnast who had been involved in the program between the ages of 10 to 15 years. In almost all cases the Institute environment seemed to provide a model for identity exploration, with opportunities to see examples of multiple role taking. However, exploration of multiple roles did not necessarily relate to issues of career, with identity exploration more likely to be related to broader social and personal issues associated with adolescence, as these comments illustrate:

...being in a residential environment didn’t make me focus differently because there were enough examples within all the sports of athletes that were working, attending university, being professionals, that I could see there were opportunities to excel in both. (Female - Basketball)

I didn’t really do much before I went down there (to AIS) in terms of going out and stuff. I wasn’t really into that kind of stuff, because everything was soccer. And then when I went down there we started going out, and I realised that soccer wasn’t everything, and it opened my eyes that there are more important things. (Male - Soccer)
Closely related to the issue of identity formation is ego development. No significant correlations were found between transition reaction and ego-related questions concerning feelings of uniqueness, or being the focus of everyone’s attention. However, some qualitative evidence was found for the effect of ego development, with early and mid-adolescent athletes describing more problems adjusting to the loss of attention than older athletes, as the experiences of this 15 year old athlete illustrates:

Mother: Another part of it was, which we could see but X probably couldn’t see at the time, was she came to this new school and she was nobody. In Canberra she used to go to the pictures, and people who didn’t know her, knew who she was because she was like a sort of a bit of a celebrity in Canberra. But then she came here and she went to school and no-one knew who she was, where she’d been brought up in a situation where everyone knew who she was, and that was very hard. She couldn’t understand it. It took her a long time to adjust even to the fact that people didn’t know who she was.

Athlete: And I was always wondering why people weren’t coming up to me and saying ‘hi how’s it going’. That’s what they used to do...and then all of a sudden I went to a school and no-one talked to me.
Although a pattern did emerge with regard to age and disappointment associated with the loss of attention, no relationship was found between age and level of athletic identity, with younger athletes being no more likely to experience over-identification with the athlete role than their older counterparts.

With regard to other psychological variables relating to achievement motivation and attribution, no significant relationship was found between transition reaction and any of the four types of goal orientations, namely task ability $r (39) = -.11, p > .05$, ego orientation $r (39) = -.02, p > .05$, co-operation $r (39) = -.22, p > .05$ and work avoidance $r (39) = .12, p > .05$.

Similarly, no relationships were found for the four achievement motivation factors of task orientation $r (39) = -.18, p > .05$, ability orientation $r (39) = -.19, p > .05$, social approval $r (39) = .06, p > .05$, and intrinsic orientation $r (39) = .07, p > .05$), or three of the sport belief factors for ability $r (39) = .14, p > .05$, motivation/effort $r (39) = .04, p > .05$, or deception $r (39) = .21, p > .05$.

However, a slight correlation was found between transition reaction and the belief that external factors influence whether an athlete is successful or not $r (39) = .36, p < .05$. Although a relationship was found to exist for this variable, qualitative evidence only provided one clear example of an athlete who associated external influences with difficulties gaining a professional contract during the transition process.
The majority of athletes \((n = 29)\) were characterised by internal attributions relating to effort for successful and poor performance outcomes, in both sport and non-sport situations, with a further three athletes characterised predominantly by ability \((8\%)\), and six \((15\%)\) a mixture of both effort and ability. Only one athlete was characterised by external attributions relating to the difficulty of the task or environment. No clear pattern emerged from the data in relation to attributions, transition reactions, and an athlete's ability to perform in a new role or environment, due to the overwhelming preference for internal-unstable attributions. Athletes who were characterised by internal-unstable attributions were just as likely to experience a negative reaction \((52\%)\) as those who had an indifferent or position reaction \((48\%)\). Of the three athletes who exhibited predominantly internal-stable attributions, two experienced a very negative transition, and one experienced a mildly positive transition.

With regard to athlete perceptions about emotional stability present at the time of the event, only a slight relationship was found between emotional stability and overall transition reactions \(r (39) = .21, p > .05\), but further investigation revealed a pattern of change over time. Pearson's One-Tailed analysis indicated that lower levels of emotional stability at the onset of the transition event were only slightly related to the number of negative emotional responses experienced in the first month \(r (39) = -.20, p > .05\), but the relationship continued to strengthen over time (three to six months: \(r (39) = -.29, p < .05\); and six to twelve months: \(r (39) = -.35, p < .05\)). These results
indicated that athletes exhibiting lower levels of emotional stability were more likely to experience more prolonged and difficult transition experiences in comparison to athletes who perceived a high level of emotional stability.

The final psychological variable to be considered was that of cognitive development with regard to decision-making and the use of mental skills. A slight relationship was found between problem-solving abilities and transition reaction, although the result was not significant $r (39) = .31, p > .05$. All athlete participants in this sample had some form of mental skills training prior to the transition. The most commonly used mental skill was goal setting (85%), followed by pre-competition routines (59%), time management (56%), mental imagery (54%), positive self-talk (51%), focus strategies (31%), progressive relaxation (18%), distraction strategies (10%), meditation (8%), and thought stopping (3%).

A slight correlation was found between the number of mental skills used by the athletes during training and competition, and the type of transition reaction experienced $r (39) = .32, p < .05$, and a moderate relationship between the use of positive thinking as a coping strategy and transition reaction $r (39) = .44, p < .01$. Qualitative data from survey and athlete interviews provided further support for the benefits of using mental skills during the transition process, even though the majority of athletes did not indicate using mental skills strategies during the transition:

Goal setting and self motivation is essential. You feel like it's all up to you now. (Male - Golf)
I still use them now. Definitely, they come in handy. I must say we don’t do all that much here (professional basketball team), and I still go to see a psychologist now. But I still do use what they taught me all the time. Just in day to day life. At work, I work in a small organisation, and you have to use those skills. 
(Female - Basketball)

Sociological

All of the athletes described maternal parenting style in positive terms, with involvement, support, good communication, and emotional responsiveness, being the primary traits described by the participants. A similar pattern was found for fathers, with 86% of athletes describing the same type of traits as for their mothers. Only 14% of the athletes felt that their father was uninvolved, lacked emotional responsiveness, or was a poor communicator. The importance of positive and responsive parenting styles during a transition process was highlighted by the fact that the majority of athletes received the most support from their parents during that time. Even athletes who had very negative transitions indicated the importance of having an involved and emotionally responsive parent available to them (See Social Support).
Parental values did appear to have some influence on the choices athletes made in the past, but no relationship was found between parental values and transition reaction $r (39) = -.01, p > .05$. Similarly, parent behaviour was also perceived as influencing the choices athletes made, but had no relationship to transition reactions $r (39) = .04, p > .05$. The majority of athletes ($n = 21, 52\%$) felt that their parents goals and expectations had influenced their decisions, however no differences were found for transition reaction $t (37) = .02, p > .05$ for those who were influenced ($M = -.48, SD = 1.72$) and those that were not ($M = -.22, SD = 1.48$).

Of the 21 athletes who felt that parental goals and expectations influenced their decisions, 19 described the influence as having a positive effect, and two described it as a negative effect.

I think mum and dad helped me out on how far I was to achieve my goals, and what level and involvement I was to have in the future about playing soccer.

(Male – Soccer)

They always believed in me more than anybody else in my life, which I needed. They knew I could reach my goals even when I didn’t believe it myself.

(Female - Tennis)
I definitely think my parents goals and expectations influenced my decisions. But they never pushed me into anything I didn’t want to do. They always had positive, inspiring things to say to me.... They taught me to be humble and to look at things in perspective. I believe this influenced me the most once I left the program as I have had a lot of personal recognition lately. I think if I hadn’t had these qualities I could have lost focus and gone off the track.

(Female – Basketball)

The remaining 18 athletes felt that their parents’ goals and expectations did not influence their decisions before, during or after their involvement in the residential program.

No relationship was found between transition reactions and maternal or paternal expectations and goals regarding sporting achievements, or whether an athlete felt they had satisfied those expectations. However, three athletes who experienced moderate or negative transition reactions, did express concern that they had disappointed family members because of their failure to achieve their goals, or continue on with their scholarships. This disappointment or guilt associated with perceptions of failure to achieve, often manifested itself in feelings of isolation, and an inability to communicate effectively during the adaptation phase:
I felt really upset with myself that I couldn’t have done better, and that I had really let my family down, and most importantly let myself down. I didn’t know where my life was going, and I felt by myself.

(Female - Basketball)

Mother: She felt that she had let him down (father)

Athlete: I didn’t feel like I’d let you down because I’d always talked to mum and stuff like that. But with dad it was always gymnastics, gymnastics...

But then as soon as I retired me and my dad used to fight constantly because he just used to always mention it and it used to drive me nuts. I used to go off my head, and I used to walk out.

With regard to other familial variables, no relationships were found between reactions to the transition event and sibling relations, number of siblings and birth order. Athletes generally had good relationships with their siblings, with most receiving support for their sporting involvement and achievements. Three athletes thought that their parents gave them more attention than their siblings because of their sport demands and success. Two
athletes felt that birth order did influence the amount and type of parental involvement, and two gymnasts described some rivalry between siblings as a consequence of their sport demands:

While I was at the AIS though, my older sister got jealous because mum and dad would talk to our aunties, friends etc., about me all the time. Also, when they came to visit me every two to three weeks, she would complain that they were leaving her to see me and they didn’t even care. My two sisters became closer because I was gone for a long time. (Female – Gymnastics)

I was definitely treated differently due to my gymnastics involvement, and also the fact that I was the baby....My life was always quite dramatic with training, and travelling. And again my mum was always quite stressed about something. Sometimes it made it difficult. My sisters always supported me, but maybe were a bit angry at how I was treated so differently (I later found out). (Female – Gymnastics)
Only four athletes (10%) indicated that a sibling/s influenced their decision-making either before or during the transition event. In each of these situations the influence was generally related to the provision of advice and encouragement to pursue options available.

In relation to the role of non-familial members in decision-making processes, the role of peers was predominantly in the area of social support, with the nature of such support to be discussed further in Chapter 12. Peers were found to have some influence in decision-making processes for 18 of the athletes (46%), with influence occurring before entering the residential program ($n = 3$), whilst in residency ($n = 2$), during the transition process ($n = 10$), and a combination of the three stages ($n = 3$). Institute and non-Institute peers generally influenced decisions by providing encouragement and support for the athlete to pursue what choices they were already considering.

A number of other sources were influential in decision-making for nine (23%) of the athletes, with three indicating that coaches were influential in their decision to move to the Institute. The other six athletes were influenced by others relating to the transition process itself, namely; school teachers; members of a professional team; a manager; an Institute coach; an Institute coach and psychologist; and houseparents. In each of these situations the influence on decision-making was generally more pragmatic in terms of discussing issues and providing information relevant to the decision-making process.
The final area for consideration in relation to sociological variables, is that of demographics. The results indicated that socio-economic status, ethnicity and the geographical nature of the family home (urban/regional), were not related to transition reactions, however a significant difference was found for gender.

Results from an Independent Samples t-test indicated that a significant difference existed between the transition reactions of males and females $t(37) = 2.09, p < .05$, with males less likely to experience a negative reaction to the transition ($M = .09, SD = 1.51$), than their female counterparts ($M = -.94, SD = 1.56$), as illustrated in Figure 20.

![Bar chart showing transition reactions for males and females](image)

**Figure 20.** Gender differences for transition reactions ($N = 39$)
In contrast, no significant gender differences were found in relation to any individual variables other than female attachment to their mothers $t(37) = 2.07, p < .05$, and a number of specific coping strategies (detailed under Strategies). Similarly, no clear pattern emerged for gender differences following analysis of the qualitative data.

**Social Support**

The availability and nature of social support provided during the transition, was found to be a dominant theme related to the adaptation process and type of transition reactions experienced. The majority of athletes stated that they received the most support from their parents ($n = 23, 59\%$), with a further 15 athletes ($41\%$) receiving support from a combination of family members, friends and other individuals, as illustrated in Figure 21:

*Figure 21. Support providers during the transition process ($N = 39$)*
Internal Support

With respect to the nature of the internal support available, parents generally provided emotional and financial support throughout the transition process, with the role of friends being predominantly social support in the form of sharing experiences and activities. The relationship between transition reactions and support was not clearly a case of whether support was available or not, because all of the athletes who participated in the study appeared to have access to some form of internal support. There did, however, appear to be a number of differences in the nature of the support, and whether athletes were willing or able to access such support.

One of the dominant themes associated with athletes who experienced a negative transition, particularly those whose reaction was severe and prolonged, was a feeling of isolation and loneliness. In each of these cases, support was available, but the athletes often had difficulty expressing their need for assistance, or accepting help that was offered to them:

I’ve spent all my time at the Institute of Sport, and when I came out of the Institute of Sport, helping other people, and I’m sort of standing there crying out for help, and they wouldn’t come, because I’d never yell for help.

(Male - Soccer)
Parents were generally aware of their children’s need for support, and in some cases were able to find the appropriate emotional and practical ways of dealing with their child’s transition, as these examples illustrate:

Mum recognized that I needed space at certain times, so she offered me that space and gave me the opportunity to take time out and think, whether it be reminiscing, recollecting, or whether it be trying to identify future goals. (Male - Soccer)

He and I enrolled and completed a full time IT course. So we went up to the local college and did a full time IT course because he identified down there (at AIS)... how weak he was (in that area)... so we both decided that we’d bite the bullet and really support each other, and so that’s what we did. (Mother – Male Golfer)

For other parents, however, the task of communicating and assisting their child was hampered by experiences and coping strategies that athletes developed during involvement in the residential program:
I became withdrawn and really angry. I had trouble fitting back in with old friends, and trouble making new ones. My family did what they could to help, but the more they tried, the more resentful I became. (Female - Basketball)

I didn’t know how to. I didn’t know how to sit down with people. I couldn’t do it at the Institute of Sport. I’d go into my own room and I’d deal with it myself. And I would deal with it in time... My parents would see me, I’d go in my room, and my mum would come and sit on my bed. And I’d say ‘mum you’re invading my space’. ‘What do you mean?’ (mother). ‘You’re invading my space’. She’d walk out. She’d be thinking, what have I done wrong. I didn’t have anyone at the Institute to come and sit on my bed, so I don’t want you to do that. I’ll look after myself now. (Male - Soccer)
Another common theme that was evident with respect to the effectiveness of internal support, was the perception that individuals who had not been a part of the Institute program would not be able to understand how the athlete was feeling during the transition away from the residency. This perception of lack of understanding extended to close members of the family, as well as friends, and at times caused additional stress for both the athlete and family members, as illustrated by the comments of one gymnast:

...mum could have seen it, but mum doesn’t know how it feels. Mum doesn’t know exactly how I was feeling. If I’d only known someone who had felt the way, like really understanding what I was saying to them, like they could really feel it themselves. See mum could understand it, but she could only dream it. That’s the thing. She doesn’t know exactly how it feels. If I had someone like that, it would have made a big difference because I think I would have got over it during that period of time. But I had no-one. No-one really understood.

In contrast, athletes who were able to socialise with other athletes who had been through a similar experience, expressed the positive benefit of being
able to share the transition process with someone who was dealing with the
same practical and emotional experiences:

I’ve got two guys in my team who’ve just come
back (from the AIS program), and every night we
talk while we train. Last night we were talking
about who can relate to it. There’s no point talking
to someone if you can’t relate to it. If you’d never
been to Canberra, didn’t understand even how the
residence is shaped, its hard for you to understand.

(Male - Soccer)

One male basketball player who had a positive transition, described how this
common interest created a camaraderie and social connection to other ex-
Institute players that still continued, even after the transition process was
complete:

There was a couple of us going through the same
thing....We just talked to each other about what fun
times we had together, and it sort of went from
there....I spent a whole lot of time with them. It was
good to sit down and talk, talk, and we’d just talk
about the Institute and what we used to do.
Another theme that highlighted differences between positive and negative transition reactions, was disruption to close personal relationships and social networks as a consequence of involvement in the residential program. Athletes who did not have a social network to connect with in their post-transition environment were much more likely to have negative reactions to the transition process than athletes who either maintained a social network at home, or were able to continue friendships developed at the Institute:

...everyone in Year 10 has already made their friends. They’ve made their group of friends, now all of a sudden some new person’s trying to make friends. It was very hard. It took me about six months to make at least one friend.

(Female – Gymnastics)

I found it hard because all my friends had moved on. I went from being in a place with people and friends everywhere, to having no real friends.

(Male – Soccer)

Five athletes also expressed some distress at having to terminate relationships with a boyfriend or girlfriend who they had been involved with
during their residency at the Institute. The cessation of their scholarship, and the need to relocate interstate, ultimately led to the demise of all but one of these relationships, causing additional stress during the adaptation phase.

*External Support*

With regard to external support provided during the transition, the majority of athletes did not receive any support from the Institute from the time they left the residency. The overwhelming feeling amongst those who had a negative transition, and even some athletes who had a positive transition, was that support from Institute staff during the transition process would have been of some benefit in adapting to their new circumstances. Although support was available to the athletes prior to the transition if they wished to access it, many felt that a follow-up from someone at the Institute would have been of some benefit after they had left the residency:

The program at the AIS needs to develop a better way to involve and provide ex-scholarship holders a chance to follow-up and evaluate their programs within the program structure eg: follow-up camps post scholarship. (Male – Golf)

The role of the coach in particular, was perceived as being extremely important in assisting with the transition away from the residency. Athletes in
this sample varied in regard to the relationships they had with their coaches, but
whether the relationship was positive or not, the coach had a significant
influence over the way an athlete felt about themselves and their transitions. For
some athletes the coach was perceived as an important means of social and
information support, as the comments of one male soccer player illustrates:

He was almost my father, and he was good at what
he did. You could tell from day one what he was
like, and he was such a good natured person. His
knowledge of soccer was just, I can’t explain how
much he knew about soccer, but as a person as
well. Just the development of our characters, and
as a player. I respected that. I really listened to
him, and when he said something he meant it.

Similarly, the experiences of two female basketballers who had an involved and
supportive coach during the transition phase, indicate the benefits of having
continued contact with coaching staff:

...having this support definitely was beneficial. As you
work with your coaches you build respect and trust
with them, and having this follow up was a great help.
Just knowing you were facing in the right direction.
I appreciated it, and like I said before I have a great relationship with him (coach), and I still do now. If I have a problem and I want to clarify, I always just ring him up and find out what's going on. Yeah, it just made it much easier. And he also had great communication with my current coach, and so they sort of would communicate to each other on how things were going, so it was really good to have that communication.

In contrast, a number of athletes indicated some difficulty associated with the lack of support and indifference of their coaches after they left the Institute:

I think what I was probably disappointed at, is that the coaching staff never really ring you up and ask how you're doing. I know we can do the same thing, but I mean my coach said I will ring you every three or four months, and to this day he still hasn't rung me...I was waiting for him to ring. I was coming home every afternoon to see if there was a message on the machine.

I was picked by a team in Melbourne. Then about three to six months later I started hearing about things X (coach) was saying about me, and I started getting very angry
and disillusioned. Now I look back and regret the
time I spent at the Institute because it put me behind
the eight ball in terms of a career.

A number of parents whose children experienced some difficulty during
the transition phase, felt that the organisation should have provided more
support for their children in terms of information relating to their sport career
futures, productive feedback on their performances and how to improve, and an
emphasis on some emotional support in the early stages of the transition, as
illustrated by these comments:

I think from the point of view of the whole aim of what
the Institute's hopefully doing, that would be a fairly
valuable thing to do (provide support during transition),
because hopefully, the fact that a lot of the people that
go to the Institute of Sport are only there for a year or a
limited time and then come away again...what I assume
that they're trying to do is to give people a boost to their
performance and then have them go back into the States
and be there to sort of bring everything up. If those
people then just sort of crash when they fall out of the
system, then they haven't got the feedback back into the
States. (Father)
Yeah, and that was very disappointing. Here we were, they’d groomed her to go into the big wide world, and there was nothing, no support, nothing. It was very disappointing... She went out and had a shocking year (competition results)... just the emotional support wasn’t there. There was no-one telling her that ‘look you’re a very good player, you’ve done great here, let’s get out there and do it. Not even words of comfort, let alone organisation... I really think they need to sit down and map out a path. It’s like studying a career, that was her job, professional person, ‘what do you do, I’m a tennis player and I’ve got to make ends meet now’.... Surely that’s part of the whole development, not just saying well thanks very much see you later. (Father)

I feel that the whole situation would have been handled better if we had have had a lot more information. If there weren’t support people, maybe there were some people we could go to, to get that support because I think that the AIS has all the people there that you could actually go to, but I just don’t think that it’s structured in a way to pick up some of the support areas that you need. (Mother)
Although the majority of athletes felt that there would have been some benefit from contact and assistance following termination of their scholarship, four athletes acknowledged that they were not interested in receiving support at that time, as illustrated by these comments by a male soccer player:

Yeah, it would have been helpful, but I don’t know that at that point in time if I would have been ready to listen. Looking back now, if it had have been me now I would have been able to listen, but not just then. I just wanted to get out of there. I didn’t want anything to do with it. Didn’t want any contact with anybody from there.

Athletes who were interviewed also indicated that a willingness to accept organisational support would be influenced by the type of person who made contact. The general consensus was that support would be most beneficial if it came from an Institute staff member with whom the athlete had some previous relationship. Contact from staff members who had not been involved in the athlete’s sport career or residential welfare, was generally perceived to be inappropriate because the staff member would not have an adequate knowledge of the athlete’s experiences. Several of the interviewed athletes who had negative experiences, also indicated that they would have been unwilling to share their difficulties with someone they didn’t know because they had no trust
in that relationship. In particular, if the athlete was still involved in their sport, they feared that there could be repercussions if they were to share their difficulties with an Institute staff member with whom they had not developed a trusting relationship.

The last situation to consider with respect to organisational support, is the issue of ongoing assistance for athletes who are identified as ‘at risk’ athletes. Two mid-adolescent gymnasts who had been identified as having significant emotional difficulties prior to the cessation of their scholarships, continued to have problems after leaving the residency. Neither athlete was contacted by Institute staff following their return home, or offered follow-up services, even though it could be anticipated that these athletes were likely to need some assistance. Both athletes endured long term transition difficulties, and eventually had to seek out professional help in order to overcome their ongoing adjustment problems:

Last year I went to a sport psychologist. I had no pride. I said to mum, ‘look mum, I need to go to a psychologist. I’m not dealing with the changeover’. I haven’t dealt with it for four years. I’ve just been putting it behind me, and finally it’s come and nipped me on the butt.

(Female – Gymnastics)
Coping Strategies

The final resource to be considered is that of coping strategies used during the transition process. All athletes in the sample used coping strategies to some degree during the transition process. Athletes who experienced a positive transition reaction used coping strategies more often than athletes who experienced a negative or indifferent transition reaction, as illustrated in Figure 22. Of some importance is the fact that positive reaction athletes indicated using an average of 24 coping strategies on an often basis, in comparison to only 10 for the negative reaction group. Similarly, positive transition reaction athletes used a greater variety of strategies than athletes who experienced an indifferent or negative transition reaction, including emotion-focused, problem-focused, and avoidance/distraction strategies, as detailed in Table 6.

![Graph showing frequency of use](image)

**Figure 22:** Number of coping strategies used during the transition period (N = 38)
Table 6: Coping Strategies Used During The Transition Period (N = 38)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often strategy used</th>
<th>Positive Reaction (n = 14)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Indifferent Reaction (n = 7)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Negative Reaction (n = 17)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Joked and kept a sense of humour</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>Worked harder at training sessions</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Used relaxation methods</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Used imagery to escape the problem</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blamed others for what was wrong</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spent time with boyfriend/girlfriend</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Became physically/verbally abusive</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became physically or verbally abusive</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>Used thought stopping</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Used drugs prescribed by doctor</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cried</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td></td>
<td>Went to church</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>Used imagery to solve the problem</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayed</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased sexual activity</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Smoked tobacco</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used legal drugs not prescribed</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>Became physically/verbally abusive</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Took illegal drugs</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blamed others for the problem</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Got professional counselling</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Talk to a coach about the problem</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Gambled</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gambled</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Used legal drugs not prescribed</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Used imagery to escape the problem</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to church</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td>Used drugs prescribed by a doctor</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked to minister/priest/rabbi</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
<td>Took illegal drugs</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got professional counselling</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
<td>Talked to minister/priest/rabbi</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoked tobacco</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
<td>Got professional counselling</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took illegal drugs</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td></td>
<td>Used legal drugs not prescribed</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Went to church</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Talked to a minister/priest/rabbi</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examination of the type of coping strategies used always or often by the athletes, using the global and specific coping strategies identified by Lazarus (1996) and Patterson and McCubbin (1997) as a frame of reference, clearly indicates that those athletes who had a positive reaction to the event used a greater number of emotion-focused strategies than the negative or indifferent groups. Strategies aimed at regulating emotional states, including the use of humour, engaging in relaxing activities, and seeking diversions, dominated the positive reaction group, as well as a high level of access to social support from various sources. The positive group also engaged in some problem-focused strategies with the development of self-reliance and the use of social support to solve problems.

In contrast, the indifferent and negative reaction athletes relied predominantly on self-reliance and relaxing activities, and only used a greater variety of strategies sometimes instead of often. Negative reaction athletes also indicated a preference for wanting to keep to themselves and solve problems more than the other two groups, and the only social support they often accessed, was that of talking to a friend.

The results also indicated that positive and indifferent athletes tended to use ventilation of feelings less often than negative athletes, but the use of destructive or anti-social behaviour was not a preferred strategy for any of the groups. The positive and indifferent groups also indicated that they never sought professional help during the transition process, and similarly, the
negative group hardly ever accessed this form of support either. Another interesting result, given the elite athlete status of the participants, was the relatively low use of coping strategies associated with mental skills training, in particular relaxation methods, thought stopping, and mental imagery. Similarly, although social support was favoured by the positive reaction group, all three groups indicated that they hardly ever sought out a coach when faced with a stressful situation.

With regard to the role of individual coping strategies, Pearson’s R correlations indicated only a small number of significant relationships between specific coping strategies and transition reactions. ‘Joking and having a sense of humour’ was strongly related to a positive transition reaction $r (38) = .63, p < .01$, with moderate relationships also evident for the use of positive thinking $r (38) = .44, p < .01$, and reasoning with people and talking things out $r (38) = .41, p < .05$. In contrast, negative reactions were more likely to be associated with crying $r (38) = -.56, p < .01$, and the use of illegal drugs $r (38) = -.40, p < .05$.

Analysis was conducted using Mann-Whitney U-Tests, to further highlight any significant differences between coping strategies used by athletes who experienced a positive reaction, in comparison to those who experienced a negative reaction. The results indicated that the most significant difference was for joking and keeping a sense of humour $U = 3.38, p < .001$. Athletes experiencing a positive reaction ($M = 4.57$, $SD = .76$) used humour as a coping
skill more often those who experienced a negative transition \((M = 3.29, SD = 1.10)\). Differences were also found in the amount of positive thinking used \(U = 2.37, p < .05\), with positive transition reaction athletes \((M = 3.79, SD = .58)\) using positive thinking more often than negative reaction athletes \((M = 3.12, SD = .86)\). In contrast, crying was used significantly more \(U = 2.79, p = .01\), by those who experienced a negative reaction \((M = 3.00, SD = 1.12)\) in comparison to those athletes who had positive reactions to the event \((M = 1.79, SD = 1.19)\).

Coping strategies also differed in relation to the amount of involvement in activities other than training \(U = 2.00, p = .05\), with athletes experiencing positive reactions \((M = 4.00, SD = .88)\) getting involved in activities other than training more often than those experiencing a negative reaction \((M = 3.24, SD = 1.15)\).

Related Samples t-Tests indicated that coping strategies used during the transition period were generally consistent with the type of strategies used whilst in residency at the Institute. Significant differences were found on only eight of the coping strategies, as illustrated in Table 7.

The majority of the strategies that differed between the pre and post environments were emotion-focused. Of the eight significantly different strategies, six of the strategies were related to activities that were more likely to be accessible to athletes outside of the regulated Institute environment, specifically increases in coping strategies relating to more involvement in
activities other than training, driving, working on a hobby, going to a movie (club etc), drinking alcohol, and spending time with a pet. The use of relaxation methods was the only strategy to decrease, most likely as a consequence of reduced access to massage services outside of the Institute program.

Table 7

*Differences in Coping Strategies Used Before and During the Transition*

*Process (N = 38)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategy</th>
<th>t Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>At the Institute</th>
<th>During Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get more involved in activities other than training</td>
<td>5.16***</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drove or rode around in a car</td>
<td>7.18***</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked on a hobby</td>
<td>4.35***</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to a movie, club, sporting event, etc</td>
<td>4.26***</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drank alcohol</td>
<td>4.35***</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced training intensity</td>
<td>4.75***</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spent time with a pet</td>
<td>5.35***</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used relaxation method (massage, meditation etc)</td>
<td>3.22**</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < .001; ** p < .01
In relation to gender differences in coping styles, Independent Samples t-Tests indicated that overall males and females did not differ significantly on the number or type of coping strategies used. However where differences did exist, females were more likely to use emotion-focused strategies, as illustrated in Table 8.

During the period of time at the Institute, females were more likely to seek social support than males, and were more likely to use crying as a coping strategy. In contrast, males were more likely to resort to the use of alcohol and swearing as a means of coping with stress. During the transition period males and females only differed significantly on two of the coping strategies, namely crying and use of mental imagery to solve problems.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategy</th>
<th>t Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>At the Institute</th>
<th>During Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cried</td>
<td>5.40***</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spent time with spouse or boy/girlfriend</td>
<td>2.68**</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let off steam by complaining to family</td>
<td>3.06**</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swore</td>
<td>2.65**</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got close to someone you cared about</td>
<td>2.90*</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drank alcohol</td>
<td>2.23*</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to make your own decisions</td>
<td>2.26*</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used mental imagery to solve problems</td>
<td>2.17*</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$
Chapter 14

Results

Transition Model Review

The final chapter of the results section is an illustrated review of the results, placed in the context of Schlossberg et al.’s (1995) revised transition model. All three phases proposed by Schlossberg, namely approaching the transition, the transition process, and the strategies available to the individual, were found to be relevant when assessing variables that either assisted or hindered the adaptation process.

In relation to the factors that assisted an athlete towards adaptation to a new life organisation, eight variables were indicated in the approach to the transition that assisted athletes in the way the transition event proceeded, as illustrated in Figure 23. Athletes who had positive and rapid transitions accessed resources in all four areas of the 4S’s, including positive perceptions about the situation, enhancing self characteristics, ability to maintain or develop stable and fulfilling social support, and use of effective coping strategies.

In contrast, the experiences of athletes who had prolonged and negative adaptations highlighted 12 variables during the approach to the transition, that were related to difficulties experienced during the transition process itself, as illustrated in Figure 24. Their adaptations took longer, and were representative of more negative mood states and unproductive behaviour. The results also indicated variables within each of the four resource areas that hindered adaptation, including lack of future planning, inability to overcome negative thinking patterns and behaviours, and lack of stable social support networks.
Figure 23. Transition model variables that assisted the adaptation process

Approaching the Transition

Type of Event
- Congruent expectations
- Optimistic expectations

Context of the Event
- Open communication and productive feedback regarding the event
- Close contact with family members during residency
- Opportunity to pursue sport career

Impact of the Event
- Transition roles similar to that experienced in residency
- Return to a familiar environment
- Social network available in the transition environment

Transition Process Experiences
- Fast adaptation to the demands of transition environment and roles
- Desire to move on and accept new challenges present at onset of event
- Positive reminiscing about Institute experiences

Situation
- Event was desirable
- Felt prepared for the event

Support
- Social support available from parents and friends
- Organisational support available during transition
- Willingness to use available social support

Self
- Higher levels of self-esteem
- Higher levels of emotional stability
- Independence — living and coping skills
- Involved and responsive parents
- Higher level of problem solving ability
- Use of mental skills

Strategies
- Use of multiple coping strategies
- Use of a greater variety of strategies
- Use of humour and positive thinking
- Reasoning with people
- Talking things out
- More involved in non-sport activities

The Transition Process
- Short transition process — less than three months
Figure 24. Transition model variables that hindered the adaptation process

Transition Process Experiences
- Difficulty disengaging from pre-transition environment and roles
- Prolonged difficulty adapting to transition environment and roles
- Productive and unproductive reminiscing about Institute experiences
- Slower to begin looking forward and planning for the future
- Increase in ill-health/injury, and difficulties developing social network

Type of Event
- Incongruent expectations
- Apprehensive expectations
- Pessimistic expectations

Context of the Event
- Poor communication and lack of feedback regarding performances and the event
- Homesickness
- Coach influence on self-esteem
- Not able to pursue dream of a professional career
- Feeling disadvantaged by education choices

Impact of the Event
- Difficulties adjusting to a new environment
- Difficulties returning to family routines and rules
- Social network not available in transition environment
- Injury or ill health

Situation
- Event was undesirable
- Felt unprepared for the event
- Role loss experienced

Support
- Withdrawal and isolation from available support
- Lack of organisational support
- Lack of peer support in transition environment

Self
- Lower levels of self-esteem
- Lower levels of emotional stability
- Emotional autonomy - not wanting to talk about experiences or problems
- Injury or ill health during transition
- Feelings of guilt for letting others down
- Disillusionment at loss of attention

Strategies
- Less coping strategies used
- Less variety in strategies used
- Crying as coping strategy
- Use of illegal drugs

The Transition Process
- Prolonged adaptation process – Six months to three years
Chapter 15

Discussion

The first aim of this study was to determine if any relationships existed between individual transition model variables and reactions experienced by athletes during the transition process, and the results clearly indicated that specific individual variables within each of the model factors were related to transition experiences.

The second aim of the study was to determine whether athletes were more likely to have a negative or positive reaction to the transition event, with the results indicating that reactions ranged from very negative to moderately positive, with neither negative nor positive reactions being more dominant than the other. Similarly, the descriptions provided by athletes relating to their transition experiences indicated differing psychological, emotional and behavioural reactions in response to the same situational event, providing further evidence of the complexity of a transition event.

In relation to the third aim of the study relating to variables that may assist or hinder a transition process, the results clearly indicated specific model variables that either assisted or hindered the adaptation process. The statistical data and descriptions of personal experiences highlighted variables within each of the three stages of the transition model that have the potential to influence the progress of adaptation.

Discussion of the specific content relevant to each of these three aims, will be based upon the structure of Schlossberg’s et al. (1995) revised model.
Types of transition reactions, relationships between individual variables, and assistance or hindrance to the adaptation process, will be detailed under the relevant factors associated with each stage of the transition model.

Finally, the results also provided evidence to support the fourth aim of the study, namely the usefulness of using Schlossberg's et al. (1995) Revised Transition Model as a framework for analysing a transition experience. The model provides a structured approach for the collection, organisation, analysis and presentation of the data. Replication studies using the same framework will allow comparison of variables that assist or hinder the adaptation process across differing populations and transition events. Following the discussion of the role of individual variables, the usefulness of the model and methodological issues associated with the application of the model, will also be addressed.

Approaching the Transition

Type of Event

The results of this study did not replicate previous findings that an unanticipated or non-event would be perceived as more stressful (Danish et al., 1993; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Schlossberg, 1981), and be associated with more negative transition experiences and poorer emotional adjustment (Baillie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992; Kleiber et al., 1987, Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). Athletes in this study who experienced anticipated events were just as likely to have negative transitions as those athletes who experienced unanticipated events. Previous research findings also indicated that stress associated with an unexpected or non-event was likely to be related to the
lack of time to prepare for the event (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Stevens, 1990). However, the results of this study did not illustrate such a relational pattern.

One plausible explanation for the lack of association between anticipation and preparation, was the unwillingness or inability of some athletes to engage in effective deliberation about the upcoming transition event. The results indicated that having time to prepare for the event was not the key factor in adjustment, but rather whether that time was used effectively to develop realistic and optimistic expectations about the changes to be experienced. It can also be argued that evolution of realistic and optimistic expectancies is going to be dependent on a variety of factors, including individual characteristics, support services available, and knowledge or experience with the environment to be encountered during the transition.

The results provided support for the findings of Pancer et al. (2000) and Paul and Brier (2001), that the content of expectancies were better indicators of the type of reactions likely to be exhibited in the initial stages of the transition process. Athletes who were able to develop expectancies that were congruent with what they actually experienced during the transition, were more likely to have a positive reaction to the event. In contrast, athletes who developed incongruent, apprehensive or pessimistic expectations were more likely to experience adjustment difficulties. What these results suggest is that an individual can anticipate and develop expectancies about an event, but if their
perceptions about what is likely to happen do not match with what actually occurs, then adjustment difficulties are still likely to result.

Another possible influence that is closely related to the nature of expectancies, is the type of information accessed. Evidence was available that at least some athletes felt they only had a general idea of what the transition would entail, perhaps indicating that the preparation was too generic in nature. It could be argued that a more specific and individualised preparation relative to the immediate demands of the environment or roles to be encountered, would be likely to produce a more effective outcome because it would reduce the likelihood of incongruent expectations evolving.

Another plausible explanation for the failure to find a relationship between unexpected events, preparation and transition reactions, could be that athletes who do not have time to prepare for the transition may not develop specific expectations about what the transition environment and roles will require, and therefore may not experience the same level of stress that individuals experience when their expectancies and realities are incongruent.

Overall the results relating to type of event suggest that anticipating an event will not necessarily result in a more positive adaptation, but realistic and optimistic expectations are more likely to assist an individual to adapt to the changes being experienced, whereas incongruent, apprehensive or pessimistic expectations are likely to hinder the process.
Context of the Event

The context in which the event occurred was found to have some significance in relation to transition experiences. The overall residential experience did not appear to have an impact on the reactions experienced during the transition, with the majority of athletes indicating that their time in residency was a rewarding period in their life. The study reinforced previous findings that talented children benefit from being surrounded by similarly talented individuals (Buescher, 1985; Clark & Zimmerman, 1988; Feldhusen, 1991), with the vast majority of athletes enjoying the experience of residing and training with other elite athletes. Although some evidence existed for the ‘little fish, big pond’ effect described in earlier self-concept research (Marsh et al., 1995; Marsh & Parker, 1984), the overall impact of the program appeared to be beneficial, with high levels of performance and personal life satisfaction experienced by most athletes involved. However, certain aspects of the residential lifestyle did appear to hinder adaptation during the transition process, including disruption to social support networks, homesickness, circumstances surrounding scholarship termination, and family functioning where an athlete returned to the family unit.

The role of peer group in the pre-transition environment was found to influence transition experiences, predominantly where close friendships had been formed, and relocation resulted in a disruption to those relationships. Like previous studies, athletic peers were indicated as a major source of social
support during the residential program (Hawkins & Blann, 1996; Scanlan et al., 1989), and as a consequence, relocation interstate or internationally caused some disruption to that support network for a significant number of athletes. Disruption to social networks associated with the pre-transition environment, coupled with disintegration or non-existence of peer group support in the transition environment, was related to greater adjustment and therefore hindered the transition process. For some athletes the issue was not loss of friendships associated with the pre-transition environment, but rather a failure to develop friendships within the Institute environment, which exacerbated symptomology associated with homesickness. The results replicated previous research indicating that athletes who fail to gain acceptance by their athletic peers, or who experience a loss of friendship due to relocation, may suffer consequences such as lack of support, and feelings of loneliness (Baillie, 1994; Crook & Robertson, 1991, Scanlan et al., 1991).

The results also provided further support for previous findings illustrating the negative impact on biological, psychological and sociological functioning as a consequence of prolonged homesickness (Fisher et al., 1986, Thurber et al., 1999, Van Tilburg et al., 1999). In some instances, the dysfunction resulting from prolonged homesickness influenced athlete decisions to terminate scholarships earlier than anticipated, which in turn influenced their perceptions about the approaching transition.
The decision to terminate involvement influenced transition perceptions in two distinct ways. Firstly, some athletes perceived the transition to be a positive event because it provided relief from the difficulties being experienced in the residential environment, and for these athletes the transition to the home environment was a positive one. In contrast, other individuals were relieved to be back in the family environment, but adaptation was hindered due to resentment, guilt or regrets about their inability to cope with the residential lifestyle when other athletes had been able to achieve such an outcome.

Obviously some athletes received relief from the negative symptomology associated with homesickness, but for others negative consequences such as depressed mood, continued into the transition environment. It can be argued that the presence of depressed mood prior to the transition, may have exacerbated the negative thoughts and depressed mood that the athletes continued to experience during the transition, particularly if incongruent expectations or guilt and resentment were present. As a result, it could be suggested that an athlete who has had adjustment difficulties in the past, may be at a greater risk of experiencing ongoing adjustment difficulties during the ensuing change of circumstances.

Another important contextual issue that became evident from the data, was the way in which the termination of the scholarship was handled by organisational staff. The findings of this study clearly indicate that individuals who are linked to the transition event, can have an impact on the way an
individual perceives and reacts to such an event. In this sample, athletes whose residential scholarship was terminated early or not renewed without clear communication regarding the reasons why, were more likely to experience adjustment difficulties than those athletes who had a clear understanding of the circumstances under which their scholarship ended. Athletes who received productive and positive feedback from coaching staff regarding their performance and future prospects, whether they anticipated the event or not, were less likely to experience negative perceptions about the ending of their scholarship.

The benefits of positive reinforcement and compatible coach-athlete relationships are well documented in the context of sport participation (Cox, 1998; Williams, 1993), but they also need to be considered when analysing a transition event that ultimately involves both the athlete and the coach. The results obtained in the current study indicated two types of coaching behaviours that appeared to hinder the adaptation process, specifically overemphasis on negative feedback during the coach/athlete relationship which impacted on self esteem and confidence, and lack of feedback or isolation immediately before and after the scholarship ended. The results of this study indicate that coaching styles associated with a preponderance of negative feedback were likely to be associated with decrements in athlete self-esteem and confidence, and that self-esteem was found to be significantly related to transition reactions. As a consequence, it can be suggested that where an athlete has experienced a drop in
self-esteem as a consequence of coaching behaviours, they could be at greater risk of experiencing a negative transition. It may also be suggested that if the coach/athlete relationship has not been characterised by open communication during the residency, it is likely that debriefing at the termination of the scholarship may either be non-existent or counterproductive in terms of athlete perceptions about their future prospects.

Cohen and Wills (1985) concluded that “self-esteem is enhanced by communicating to persons that they are valued for their own worth and experiences and are accepted despite any difficulties or personal faults” (p.313). It would certainly seem logical to assume that communication of this nature at the time the scholarship is terminated, would have some positive influence regarding expectations and self-belief regarding future prospects.

Of similar importance is the impact of termination of the athlete/coach relationship where open communication has existed whilst the athlete was part of the residential squad, with athletes experiencing a sudden change in this relationship expressing some disillusionment as to why they were suddenly isolated. Given the importance that a coach may have in an athlete’s life, particularly in regard to the issue of attachment in the absence of adult family members, the way in which coaches terminate their relationship may have some impact on the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours that an athlete exhibits during the transition process. The results clearly indicated that positive and productive communication between the athlete and the coach was a desirable
outcome, with the majority of athletes believing that such communication would assist with the transition away from an elite training squad.

Another issue raised in relation to the role of the pre-transition environment, was the impact of residential living on family functioning where an athlete returned to the family unit. The results of this study provided support for Dorsel and Wages (1993) findings that residential programs do have an impact on family functioning. However, their finding that desire for less home visits increased over time was not replicated in this study, with the majority of athletes indicating a desire for more home visits during their residency.

The dominant theme that did emerge in this study, was the difficulty experienced by athletes and their parents in adapting to the growth of independence and emotional autonomy that occurred during the residential period. Unlike previous studies that found signs of institutional dependency (Pearson & Petitpas, 1990), the athletes in this sample overwhelming exhibited growth in independence in relation to life skills, emotional autonomy, decision-making, and coping strategies.

Changes associated with a growth in independence did lead to more prolonged adjustment difficulties for some athletes, with those who experienced more negative transitions exhibiting varying degrees of difficulty adjusting to family lifestyle routines and rules, open communication with parents, and resentment at loss of independence associated with the residential lifestyle. Athletes and parents both indicated that adjustment problems arose because
they were unprepared for what to expect when the transition occurred, with all
parties requiring time to adjust to changes that had occurred during the period
of absence.

This finding further reinforces the important role of expectancies in the
transition process. If all parties involved in the transition process have the
opportunity to seek out information and develop realistic expectations about the
type of changes that have occurred over the course of time, and the impact they
may have on family functioning, then the adjustment period begins immediately
upon the athlete returning to the family unit. In the case of this sample, the
adjustment period was prolonged because the parties involved did not begin to
address the issue of change until confronted with the practical ramifications as
they developed during the course of the transition process.

Another issue that further exacerbated this problem, was the physical
isolation that some parents experienced whilst their child was in residency. For
some families, insufficient home visits resulted in reduced opportunities for
parents to become gradually acquainted with changes in their child’s behaviours
and attitudes prior to their return to the family unit. Parents and athletes who
experienced difficulties all agreed that the adjustment to family life would have
been assisted by having more adequate knowledge and communication
regarding the issues that might arise during the transition process.

Given the important role that parents have in their child’s development,
it would seem to be beneficial to have parents more involved during the
residential experience, not only in terms of alleviating possible difficulties associated with homesickness, but also as a buffer to family disruption which may result when an athlete returns to the family home. However, given the experiences of many of the parents in this sample, there is some justification to agree with the comments of Wylleman et al. (2000), that “although the quality of the athlete-parent relationship has been shown to be a stronger influence on athlete’s achievements than that of the athlete-coach relationship, it is not easy to convince the sporting world of the necessity to accept that parents play a constructive and positive role in the young athlete’s sports career” (p.157).

The final contextual issue that was found to be related to transition experiences, was the choices available to the athlete at the time the transition occurred. Unlike the results reported by Pats (1987), no relationship was found between pre-existing familial relationships and choices relating to living arrangements, with athletes providing various emotional and practical reasons why they wished to return to the home. However, choices relating to the continued participation in their scholarship sport, was a significant indicator of long term adjustment.

Athletes who were not able to continue in their sport at the same or higher level, were more likely to have lower levels of adjustment 12 months after their scholarship ended, than athletes who were able to continue. The two issues that appeared to be most relevant in terms of understanding the relationship of sport career choices and transition reaction, were disappointment
and regrets associated with the non-attainment of specific goals, or resentment relating to the way their career ended. In both these situations the athletes generally seemed to be more reticent to set new goals and move on to new challenges because of difficulties associated with acceptance of the circumstances surrounding the ending of their sport career. Similarly, where an athlete had anticipated becoming a full time athlete, and that goal had not come to fruition, they were more likely to express concerns about feeling disadvantaged in comparison to similarly aged individuals in the workforce.

These finding illustrate the benefits of developing skills and interests in activities related to post-sport career opportunities (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Werthner & Orlick, 1986), particularly for an athlete who will no longer be able to continue to participate at the same level of competition. However, the results also indicated that athletes in a residential setting may not willingly avail themselves of the opportunity to expand their education or work-related skills, even where such opportunities are readily available. Athletes in this sample who were focused on attaining a full-time athletic career, were more likely to choose educational choices based on a desire to alleviate some of the stress associated with the demands of juggling education and elite sport participation, rather than on potential career paths. In cases where those athletes were not able to pursue sport careers as anticipated, they were at greater risk of experiencing adjustment difficulties associated with
a perceived reduction in choices available to them as a consequence of educational outcomes achieved during the residency.

As a result, an athlete’s ability to cope with the demands of the training environment and education is likely to be a better indicator of transition adjustment than the availability of the resource in the pre-transition environment, because it is more likely to indicate that an athlete has been able to achieve some success in both areas. Similarly, athlete acknowledgement of the need to develop relevant workforce skills unrelated to their sport careers, will assist with the adaptation process, particularly where a full time sport career does not eventuate.

The results of this study also provide further evidence of the importance of a structured, well-funded transition program for residential programs. Ensuring athletes have access to suitable education and career advice, emotional and social support, and appropriate debriefing at scholarship termination, requires a high degree of planning and training of support staff to deliver such services. This in turn requires appropriate funding to be available, as well as a desire from Institute management and staff members, associated sporting organisations, and athletes, to maximize the potential benefits of such a system. Anderson and Morris (2000), in their review of career transition programs in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, noted the difficulties associated with developing and maintaining life-skill programs:
...many countries that have established large, full-time, elite athlete training programs during the last 20 years have been slow to develop life-skill programs for elite athletes....those countries that have developed programs have generally not implemented them with the conviction this is necessary to create the necessary impact. In the United States, the promising CAPA program at the start of the 1990s was prematurely terminated due to the lack of funding, just as it was starting to develop momentum and positive responses from athletes. Nothing significant has replaced it. The Canadian system has potential, but it has not been taken to the athletes with sufficient commitment to draw the most from it (p.78).

Even where programs do exist, the emphasis may be directed to one specific area, and may not adequately reflect the needs of all the individuals who are required to make a transition:

A similar story emerges for professional sport, typified in the United States, where a substantial amount of money has been invested in preparing for retirement, but the emotional aspects of the transition have been relatively neglected in the programs that have developed, which typically focus on financial issues.

(Anderson & Morris, 2000, p.78)
Although ACE is acknowledged as being one of the advanced programs in the world in relation to athletes life-skills and education, and provides more than just financial and retirement planning (Anderson & Morris, 2000), the evidence from this research suggests that more still needs to be done to cater for the emotional and social welfare of the athletes.

Exposure to certain antecedents in the pre-transition environment will influence the type of transition experienced by an individual. As a consequence, transition programs need to develop strategies that address the psychological, physical, behavioural, familial and social consequences of a transition, as well as the practical and financial considerations of education and career development. Further, it could be argued that these programs should be implemented as a compulsory part of the residential program to overcome athlete reluctance to participate, particularly for adolescent athletes who may not have the life experience to comprehend the value of being involved in such a program.

*Impact of the Event*

The final area for consideration when approaching a transition is the impact of the event, that is the degree to which the transition alters one’s daily life (Schlossberg et al., 1995). The results of this study did not fully support Schlossberg’s contention that the degree of change experienced results in a corresponding rise in stress. The overall degree of change, measured by the
number of changes being experienced, was not found to be related to transition reactions. However, the nature of some of those changes was indicative of the type of transition reactions an athlete was likely to experience. Athletes who experienced negative transition reactions generally experienced a greater degree of change with respect to diet, health, or disruption of social networks, and a greater number and more severe degree of change in psychological indicators relating to attitudes, emotions and behaviours.

The results of the study provided evidence that the majority of athletes experienced changes in diet, sleep patterns, and relaxation, as a result of changes to training regimes. However, changes in dietary patterns appeared to be the only variable that indicated some difference between negative and positive reactions, with athletes having negative transitions more likely to alter their dietary patterns to include more junk food and alcohol. One plausible explanation for this finding is that such behaviours occurred as a consequence of greater availability of junk food and alcohol in the transition environment. Research evidence suggests that individuals will show an increased preference for restricted or forbidden foods (Franken, 1994), and given that junk food and alcohol would have been restricted foods in the regulated environment of the Institute, it is not unrealistic to assume that deregulation of the environment provided more opportunity to enjoy the previously restricted food substances. Similarly, changes in the quality of dietary regimes are not unusual for elite athletes, with athletes more likely to consume foods that they enjoy when they
are not under the close scrutiny of a coach (Meredith & Stern, 1992). In contrast, it could also be argued that athletes who had a negative transition may be been more likely to deregulate their dietary habits in response to negative mood states (Franken, 1994), and that adjustment difficulties may therefore be partly related to the effects of deregulation of eating habits (Menkehorst & Van Den Berg, 1997; Wylleman et al., 1993).

One physiological variable that was found to have some degree of impact where it was present at the time of the transition, was that of injury or ill-health, with athletes who entered the transition suffering from health problems appearing to be more susceptible to adverse reactions to the transition process. There is ample evidence that injury and eating disorders, particularly when they result in early career termination, are related to greater emotional disturbance and difficulties adjusting to retirement (Alfermann, 2000; Cox, 1998; Kleiber & Brock, 1992; Kleiber et al., 1987; Lavallee, 2000), and this was also found to be the case in this study.

Given the research evidence to date, it can be reasonably assumed that if athletes are experiencing emotional difficulties associated with health problems and the impediment of their sporting goals when approaching the transition, then they are much more likely to continue to experience emotional difficulties during the transition process itself. It can be strongly argued, therefore, that existence of health related problems prior to the onset of the transition event will hinder the adaptation process.
The results did not generally support the contention that relocation would lead to an increase in emotional disturbance (Hendershot, 1989), although a number of individuals did experience difficulties coping with new environments. Athletes varied in their responses to relocation, with the availability of social support being evident as a defining characteristic between those athletes who adapted well to a new environment, and those that did not (Martin, 1999; Moyle & Parkes, 1999; Pitman & Bowen, 1994). The impact of relocation did not appear to be affected by the upward, lateral, or downward movement of an athlete's career, as reported by Eby and Dematteo (2000), with upward movement just as likely to be associated with relocation difficulties as relocation associated with downward movement in sport participation. The results of this study indicated that relocation in itself may not be a hinderance to the adaptation process, but other factors present in the transition environment obviously have the potential to influence the reactions experienced.

One area in which the degree of impact was significantly related to transition reactions, was the number of negative psychological indicators present immediately after the transition event occurred, and the length of time those negative indicators persisted. Athletes who experienced a significant number of negative psychological, emotional and behavioural changes in the first month were more likely to have prolonged and difficult transitions, with the degree of difficulty moderately related to the number of negative indicators present. In contrast, athletes who experienced positive reactions immediately
after the event, either adapted quickly and ceased to exhibit the positive indicators, or continued to benefit in the long term with a maintenance or an increase in positive psychological, emotional and behavioural reactions over a twelve month period. It is evident from these results that presentation of negative psychological indicators in the first month of a transition experience is likely to hinder the adaptation process, with lack of intervention also likely to prolong the adaptation process.

The Transition Process

The results of this study clearly illustrated the usefulness of Bridges (1981, 1986) organisational approach to understanding the transition process. All four elements of Bridges theory were found to be evident in this sample, however the way in which the stages manifested themselves differed depending on the type of process experienced. The results also provided support for previous research findings that athletes experiencing the same type of transition experience may vary greatly in their reactions, from the brief and unremarkable, right through to acute distress and difficulty (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Lavallee et al., 2000; Menkehorst & Van Den Berg, 1997; Wylleman et al., 1993).

The evidence suggested three types of Endings for this sample, namely Uneventful, Challenging, and Problematic, with each grouping illustrating different pathways to the Beginning phase related to a new life organisation, as illustrated in Figure 25.
Figure 25. Illustration of the transition process using Bridges Three Stage Transition Theory
All athletes in the sample ultimately achieved the Beginning stage described by Bridges, but each group exhibited different characteristics that affected their progress towards that new beginning.

The experiences of the *Uneventful* group provided support for Schlossberg’s et al. (1995) contention that individuals do not have to go through all four aspects of Bridges theory in order to achieve a new beginning, but they must at the very least disengage from their previous roles and environment. The athletes in this group did not appear to have any difficulty disengaging from their old roles, identity and environment, and there was no evidence that they spent time engaging in ‘looking back’ or reminiscing about their experiences. Their transition was, as Baillie and Danish (1992) described, “brief and unremarkable” (p.90).

The *Challenging* group, in contrast, illustrated the basic structure of Bridges theoretical model. These athletes initially experienced some difficulties disengaging from their pre-transition roles and environment, but they did not exhibit signs of disillusionment, disenchantment, or negative psychological indicators generally associated with a difficult transition process. They moved quickly toward resolution of their adjustment difficulties, generally within one to three months, and therefore were able to begin a new life organisation relatively quickly.
The final group, those athletes who were categorised as having *Problematic* endings, exhibited all aspect of Bridges model, including the negative consequences associated with disenchantment and disillusionment associated with disengagement from the pre-transition roles, identity and environment. Further evidence was found to support previous research findings relating to the type of negative psychological indicators likely to be exhibited during the Neutral Zone (Cutrona, 1982; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavallee et al., 2000; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Zaichowskey et al., 2000). Some evidence was also found to support the idea that symptoms associated with a negative transition experience may be similar to those associated with the mourning process (Baillie, 1993; Blinde & Stratta, 1992). Like previously reported findings (Baillie, 1993; Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000), the results also indicated that athletes who suffer from adjustment difficulties can endure transition processes that can take up to two years or more before a new life organisation is achieved. The findings clearly indicated that the acuteness of the transition reaction was associated with a corresponding protraction of the Neutral Zone.

An examination of the different pathways that transition processes followed, clearly indicates that effective and speedy disengagement from the pre-transition roles, identities, and environment, will assist the adaptation process. In contrast, where athletes struggle with the disengagement process, they are much more likely to be hindered by the negative psychological
consequences of disenchantment and disillusionment associated with the Neutral Zone.

*Potential Resources - The 4 S's*

*The Situation*

The role of perceptions was found to have some influence in the adaptation process. Previous research has indicated that sudden changes are more likely to be associated with negative perceptions about a transition (Schlossberg, 1981; Baillie, 1993), however the results of this study showed no relationship between the two. Individuals who experienced sudden changes did not necessarily experience the negative affect one would expect to see. Similarly, athletes who had gradual transitions with substantial planning were not immune from having some negative perceptions about the event and subsequent negative reactions, in contrast to previous research findings (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Stevens, 1990). It can be argued therefore, that it may not be the suddenness of the event per se that leads to negative affect, but perhaps the nature of the sudden event and associated expectancies.

Previous research in the area of sudden events in sport has generally focused on negative occurrences such as career-ending injury and deselection (Alfermann, 2000; Lavallee, 2000), but sudden events do not necessarily have to result in a downward movement in career or lifestyle prospects. They can, in fact, lead to upward movement and attainment of higher goals, which was the
case for a number of individuals in this sample. This fact may have led to a lower than expected correlation between suddenness of the event and transition reactions, because a sudden positive event is less likely to be associated with dissatisfaction with goal achievement, lower self-esteem and emotional adjustment difficulties that have been found to be associated with more negative events (Baillie, 1993; Crook & Robertson, 1991).

It can also be suggested that perceptions regarding the suddenness of the event, and subsequent reactions to the transition, may be tempered by the level of desirability associated with the onset of the event. Previous research has indicated a link between desirability of the event and transition experiences (Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985; Swain, 1991; Werthner & Orlick, 1986), a finding replicated in this study. A relationship was found between how happy an athlete was that their residency was ending, how prepared they felt to deal with the event, and their transition experiences. Feeling happy about the transition event was found to be associated with a greater likelihood of experiencing a positive reaction, or no reaction, during the transition process. Reflective of the findings described by Swain (1991), some athletes in this sample found the event desirable because of the relief it provided from the demands of the elite environment, and for others it represented an opportunity to move on to other life activities and challenges.

Of the situational results presented, perceptions of the desirability of the event appeared to have the greatest potential to influence other perceptions
relating to the situation. It could be argued that even when an event is sudden in nature, if the athlete is happy that the change is going to occur, then such desirability may act as buffer against the more negative affect generally associated with sudden transitions. Similarly, if an athlete is happy about the prospect of the transition event occurring, they may also be more willing to prepare mentally and practically for the change in circumstances. In contrast, those who are not happy about the change, may be more reluctant to face the reality and impending nature of the event, and therefore may be less open to making preparations for the change in circumstances.

Although no relationship was found between perceptions relating to the source of the change and transition reactions, it was clear that athletes who suffered from injury or ill health prior to the onset of the event, were more likely to experience adjustment difficulties. Upon closer examination, adjustment issues tended to be more severe when an athlete was forced to terminate their scholarship early as a consequence of medical or coach decisions, rather than as a personal choice to relief the symptoms associated with their injury or ill health. This finding provides further support for previous studies that have found that voluntary changes are indicative of better transition adjustment (Crook & Robertson, 1991; Ungerleider, 1997), and also provides another plausible explanation for why no relationship was found between suddenness of the event and transition reaction. It may be suggested that even if an event was negative and sudden in nature, a perception of control over the
decision to enter the transition might provide a buffer against the feelings of disillusionment and resentment which may be associated with external sources of change, and therefore results in better adjustment in the long term.

The issue of role change was another area where perceptions appeared to influence transition reactions, but only for a small number of individuals. Overall there was no difference in transition reactions relating to role change per se, with most athletes experiencing some form of role change in the transition environment. However, role loss was more likely to be associated with poorer adjustment during the transition process due to the loss of status associated with being an elite athlete, replicating the findings of previous research (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Grove et al., 1997). Some evidence was also found that adjustment problems associated with role loss were related to lower levels of satisfaction as a consequence of failure to achieve sporting goals, particularly in relation to the professional careers or Olympic participation (Baillie, 1993; Kleiber et a., 1987).

Perceptions relating to duration of the event and previous experience with a transition were not found to be relevant for the athletes in this sample. The transition event was a permanent one for the majority of the athletes, and therefore the nature of the event did not provide enough scope to make effective judgments about how perceptions regarding permanency can impact on the transition process.
In relation to previous experiences, there was some indication that athletes who struggled to make the adaptation to the Institute environment were at risk of experiencing difficulties during the transition process, but there was insufficient evidence to make conclusions about how perceptions regarding their previous transition influenced the way they were thinking during the transition out of the Institute environment. Similarly, no evidence was provided of any type of skills that were learnt during the previous transition experience, that were deemed to be helpful during the subsequent transition event.

The results of this study and of previous research, suggest that perceptions relating to the situation can either act as assets or liabilities during the adaptation process. Perceptions about feeling prepared for the change, being happy that the change was going to occur, and having some control over the decision to enter the transition, all appear to assist the adaptation process for the athletes in this sample. In contrast, suffering a perceived negative event, and feeling that the decision to enter the transition event was not within their control, was more likely to hinder the adaptation process for individuals experiencing quite negative transition reactions. Similarly, experiencing a role loss that was associated with decrements in self-esteem and identity, was also likely to hinder progress toward a new life organisation.

*The Self*

The role of biological resources available at the time of the transition event was found to have some role in hindering or assisting the adjustment
process. The age at which an athlete entered the transition had no relationship to the type of reaction experienced. Early or mid-adolescent athletes were no more at risk of having a negative reaction than their late adolescent counterparts. Similarly, the age at which an athlete entered the residential environment, and their length of stay, also had no relationship to transition reactions.

In contrast to previous research findings (Angold et al., 1998; Buchanan et al., 1992; Susman et al., 1991) no evidence was found that the adolescents in this sample were generally characterised by intense mood, anxiety or self-consciousness, with more than half of the athletes experiencing no noteworthy negative affect during the twelve month period measured. Females were no more likely to experience negative affect and depressed mood than their male counterparts, but the incidence of depressed mood (28%) was similar to that found with non-athletic adolescent samples (Petersen et al., 1993).

Although athletes in this sample were not generally characterised by the emotional upheaval often associated with the adolescent period (Santrock, 1996), it was evident that the incidence of depressed mood was similar to that of non-adolescent samples unrelated to a transitional event. This finding lends some weight to the argument that the incidence of depressed mood and negative affect associated with a transition event, may be related to the developmental stage at which the event occurs. However, without the availability of an adult cohort as a comparative group, the findings do not have sufficient depth to establish whether problems associated with the transition may have been exacerbated by adolescent development issues.

In relation to more serious biological factors that had the potential to assist or hinder the process, the role of health-related problems was found to be of significant importance. With respect to eating disorders, one case of bulimia
was identified in this sample, with symptoms existing prior to the onset of the transition. For the other athlete, symptoms associated with anorexia nervosa did not begin until the transition process had begun. In both cases the athletes experienced severe adjustment difficulties, and similar to the findings of Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000), their transition adjustment was prolonged as a consequence of the negative psychological, physiological and social difficulties associated with these disorders.

Another issue that can have an impact on mood states is the presence of burnout at the time the transition event occurred. Only three athletes in this sample described symptoms associated with burnout, including fatigue, low motivation, negative affect, lack of interest or enjoyment in their sport, and sleep disturbances. One of these athletes dropped out of the sport altogether, and the other two took an extended break from their sport before returning to compete at the same level. Although burnout was likely to indicate a desire to remove themselves from the elite environment, it did not relate to the type of transition reactions the athletes experienced, with two athletes having positive transitions associated with a relief from the symptoms associated with burnout, and one having a negative reaction because of other factors relating to career choices and peer relations.

Although burnout was found to be unrelated to transition reactions, health status in general was associated with the adjustment process. The results of this study supported previous research evidence that a stressful life situation is related to an increased risk of health complaints and injury (Greenberg, 1999; Rotella & Heyman, 1993; Smith et al., 1990). The results also replicated the findings of Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) that physical health status has the potential to affect the quality of adaptation, with athletes in this sample who
experienced an increase in health problems more likely to have a negative transition reaction. The nature of this study, however, does not allow for conclusions to be made regarding the cause and effect. It cannot be said whether the stress associated with the transition increased the incidence of health related problems or injuries, or whether the onset of health related problems caused the athletes to experience more negative affect which further exacerbated transition related stress. However, the results of this study and previous research, does suggest that increases in health problems or injuries during a transition event will hinder the adjustment process, and thereby increase the likelihood that an athlete will have a negative and prolonged adjustment to the changes being experienced.

Finally, no evidence was found that the stage of pubertal development was associated with increased parent-child conflict, supporting more recent research which suggests that parent-child conflict in the adolescent years may not be as prevalent as generally believed (Laursen et al., 1998; Steinberg, 1990). Parents and athletes were generally characterised by close relationships, and although difficulties were often experienced in relation to adaptation back into family routines, the description of events did not indicate significant overt levels of conflict. Athletes were more likely to describe internal struggles in relation to adaptation, with most athletes who were interviewed indicating that they felt it was their responsibility to change attitudes and behaviours to accommodate family routines. Athletes who were most likely to describe direct conflict with their parents were generally characterised by difficult transition experiences. It could be argued that the stress associated with the transition experience was more likely to have influenced the level of conflict experienced, rather than the adolescent stage of development per se. The evidence certainly
suggests, however, that conflict with family members during the transition period may hinder the adaptation process by both limiting access to social support, and possibly increasing the likelihood of negative thoughts, behaviours and affect associated with the conflict.

With regard to psychological resources available at the time of the transition, a number of variables were found to either assist or hinder the adaptation process. Attachment to parents, and parent-child relations, were not found to be directly related to the transition reactions of athletes. However, the results did replicate previous research findings that secure attachment to parents is associated with higher levels of self-esteem and emotional well-being (Allen et al., 1994; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Frank et al., 1990; Grotevant, 1998; Rice, 1990). This finding is quite relevant given the important role that parents play in an elite athlete's development, and accessibility to parents during involvement in a residential program.

Given that the results indicated that higher levels of self-esteem were associated with better adjustment, it can be argued that the role of parent-child attachment is fundamentally important during the developmental years in order to increase the likelihood of a child leaving the residential program with higher levels of self-esteem. The results indicate that parents do not actually have to be directly involved with the child in order for attachment issues to be relevant, but rather that the child feels secure in exploring their environment knowing that parental attachment figures are available if needed (Bowlby, 1982). Parents interviewed in this study generally acknowledged the benefits of a growth of independence, particularly life skills, but also felt that continued involvement in their child's welfare and day-to-day activities was important for maintaining their relationship during the residential period. These results suggest that
adolescents who are involved in residential programs benefit from maintaining strong attachment to their parents, and that independent behaviour does not necessarily translate into detachment from parents.

In contrast, where athletes developed a level of emotional autonomy during the residential stay, but also appeared to be detached from their parents, they were more likely to experience decreased feelings of understanding and a reduced desire to seek support from their parents when they returned home, a pattern which replicates previous research findings (Greenberger & McLaughlin, 1998; Ryan & Lynch, 1989). The results relating to social support and coping strategies provide further evidence that emotional autonomy and detachment are likely to hinder the adaptation process, particularly where an individual returns to the family unit following a sustained absence.

Another attachment issue that is relevant to consider in a transition event, is that athletes in this sample did indicate a tendency to seek out attachment figures in the Institute environment to supplement parental figures. These findings support Rice's (1990) contention that adolescence may rely on other sources of attachment when faced with adjustment issues, and that multiple attachments may exist as the adolescent explores different situations.

Athletes in this sample indicated attachment to a range of individuals, including peers and various Institute staff members. These relationships appeared to assist the athletes in their adjustment to the Institute lifestyle, but no clear pattern emerged with regard to the impact of separation from these attachment figures, except where athletes had developed strong attachment to their coaches. As previously indicated, where athletes had developed attachments to their coaches, the way in which this relationship was severed had an impact on how an athlete felt about the transition, particularly with regard to self-esteem and
the seeking of external social support. It could be argued that if attachment between parent and child is associated with levels of self-esteem, then it is reasonable to assume that attachment issues associated with a coach may also influence levels of self-esteem. If this is the case, then once again the nature of the communication between an athlete and a coach at the onset of a transition, has the potential to either hinder or assist the athlete in the adjustment process.

The results provide further support for previous research findings on the importance of self-esteem in a transitional event (Hickman et al., 2000), with the experiences described by athletes in this sample clearly illustrating the devastating impact that low self-esteem can have on thought processes and confidence. As a consequence, it is reasonable to assume that an athlete who suffers from low self-esteem at the time of a transition is at greater risk of experiencing adjustment difficulties during the transition, but equally possible is that athletes who initially have high levels of self-esteem, may experience decrements in self-esteem if the circumstances surrounding the onset of the transition are detrimental to the athlete’s self-belief or future prospects.

In relation to athletic identity, the results of this study did not replicate previous findings that high levels of athletic identity were more likely to be associated with transition adjustment difficulties (Brewer et al., 2000). The most likely explanation for this finding is the variation in transition pathways experienced by the athletes in this sample. Previous research has tended toward examining the impact of athletic identity in relation to career transitions as a consequence of retirement, injury or deselection, but in this sample participants also represented athletes who experienced upward and lateral movements in their level of sporting involvement. A transition event that reinforces an athlete’s perception of self is obviously less likely to result in questioning of the
event and its implications, in comparison to an event that leads to a disruption of those perceptions. As a consequence, athletes who were able to continue in their sport at the same or a higher level of participation, would have been unlikely to experience any disruption to their identity. However, as previously indicated, athletes who experienced upward movement in their careers were just as likely to experience negative transition reactions as athletes who experienced downward movements.

In relation to identify foreclosure, the results support the conclusions of Murphy et al. (1996) in that the level of athletic identity was not related to identity foreclosure. The athletes in this sample generally had ample opportunity to explore and observe multiple roles in the residential environment. The fact that athletes were able to explore other options, did not necessarily translate into lower levels of athletic identity, neither were athletes more likely to become foreclosed because of the demands of their environment. The responses of the athletes in this sample supported the conclusions of Danish et al. (1993) in that the time and energy constraints of the environment were likely to reduce their commitment to success in non-sport domains, however there appeared to be an overall acceptance that this was a temporary price to pay for the experiences gained whilst involved in the residential environment.

The evidence does suggest that many athletes were focused on developing full-time professional careers, obviously because this is one of the objectives of the Institute program, but it can be argued that identity foreclosure was not a frequent occurrence because they had adequate opportunity to explore other options, and were provided with unique social and life experiences that allowed for the extension of identities outside those purely associated with a career focus (Marcia, 1991, 1994; Peterson, 1996). Identity development is an
integration of various identities to develop a coherent theory of the self (Erikson, 1950, 1968), and this integration includes far more information than just those factors associated with the pursuit of a full-time athletic career.

Where athletes did describe difficulties associated with the loss of athletic identity, it was more likely to be related to the level of ego development rather than athletic identity or foreclosure. No relationship was found between an athlete’s age and athletic identity, or between heightened levels of self-consciousness or feelings of uniqueness and transition reactions overall. However, early to mid-adolescent athletes were more likely to describe feelings of disappointment and disillusionment associated with the loss of attention associated with being an Institute athlete.

The results relating to goal orientations and achievement motivation did not provide any evidence to support previous findings that ego orientation was more likely to be associated with maladaptive beliefs and motivational patterns (Roberts et al., 1996; Treasure & Roberts, 1994; White, 1996). Similarly, no evidence was found of a relationship between transition reactions and attribution style because of the overwhelming preponderance of effort-related attributions as reasons for good and poor performances in sport and non-sport situations. However, the experiences described by some athletes in the sample did suggest that attributions could influence perceptions regarding the transition event where insufficient information was provided as to the reasons why a scholarship was not extended. Where insufficient communication was present, athletes were more likely to explain the non-renewal of a scholarship as a consequence of ability, rather than a lack of effort during the scholarship period. When internal-stable attributions are used to explain a negative event, individuals are more likely to experience greater affective responses (Joiner &
Wagner, 1995). As a consequence, the results reinforce the need for informative and productive feedback prior to the transition event in order to reduce the likelihood of athletes attributing the event to internal-stable causes.

One psychological variable that was found to have a significant relationship to transition reactions, was that of emotional stability. Athletes who had lower levels of emotional stability had more difficult and prolonged transition reactions, and as previously noted, 28% of the athletes experienced depressed mood lasting at least six months. The fact that emotional stability was not related to transition reactions until the three to twelve month periods, indicates that athletes who experienced the most difficulty were more likely to be susceptible to trait rather than situational manifestations of anxiety, in particular a reduced capacity to control negative thoughts. The results indicated that negative transition reaction athletes were significantly less likely to use positive thinking than the positive reaction group, and it could be argued that the propensity toward negative thoughts may have influenced affect, social functioning, and inhibited the seeking of social support, and thereby protracted the adjustment process. The qualitative responses of athletes who had negative transitions, certainly provides some compelling evidence that individuals with lower levels of emotional stability were more likely to be tense, restless, depressed, anxious and initially pessimistic about their future. The results also supported the findings of Seiffge-Krenke (1995) that individuals who are emotionally unstable or depressed are more likely to engage in withdrawal, with athletes experiencing the most difficulty clearly exhibiting social withdrawal from family and friends. Although cause and effect has not been established in this study, the overall pattern of results clearly suggests that lower levels of emotional stability will hinder the adaptation process.
The final psychological variable measured was that of cognitive development, specifically the role of problem-solving and mental skills in adaptation to the changes in circumstances. Problem-solving ability and use of mental skills in the transition environment were both found to be slightly related to transition reactions. Given the previous findings relating to expectations, it can be suggested that an ability to engage in problem-solving prior to the transition may assist an athlete with developing more complex and realistic expectations about difficulties likely to be experienced in the transition environment. Similarly, an athlete with a higher level of problem-solving ability is more likely to be able to generate solutions for problems as they occur during the transition process itself. The results also provided some evidence that the adolescents in this sample engaged in decision-making processes similar to those found in adults (Flavell et al., 1993; Keating, 1990), with little influence in decision-making provided by family members, friends, or organisational members. The findings provide support for the assumption that an ability to engage in problem-solving and decision-making processes would assist an athlete to more effectively adjust to the change in circumstances experienced during a transition event.

In relation to mental skills, athletes indicated an awareness and utilisation of mental skills whilst involved in the residential program, but like the findings of Sinclair and Orlick (1993), not all athletes continued to use mental skills during the transition period. Coping strategies and qualitative responses provided further evidence of the transferability of mental skills training to non-sport environments (Mayocchi & Hanrahan, 2000), however, the pattern of mental skills use indicated that a substantial number of athletes did not engage in the successful transfer of mental skills training. It may be that
athletes who did not adequately transfer mental skills training had not been informed of, or considered, the applicability of those skills in a non-sport situation that elicited a stress response. Given that dietary and training regimes are susceptible to deregulation once an athlete is removed from an elite training squad or environment, it may also be plausible to expect that the use of mental skills may undergo a similar reduction because a coach is no longer driving the implementation and maintenance of mental skills training. Although mental skills were not utilised by all the athletes in the transition process, the results do indicate that knowledge and continued use of mental skills is likely to assist an athlete to deal with stressors associated with a change in circumstances.

The final area for consideration in relation to Self, is that of sociological variables. The overwhelming majority of athletes in this sample described parenting styles associated with an authoritative style, and the findings replicated previous research that adolescents display a high regard for their parents (Grotevant, 1998; Harter, 1990). No evidence was found of sibling rivalry as a consequence of an athlete’s return to the family unit, with athletes generally describing sibling interactions characterised by emotional support and encouragement. Whilst parental goals, values and expectations had an influence in adolescent development as expected (Harter, 1978, 1981; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985, 1986), they were not related to the transition reactions of athletes. Similarly, no evidence was found that athletes felt indebted to their parents, or that the level of parental involvement influenced transition reactions in any way.

However, a number of athletes who experienced quite negative reactions to the transition experienced some distress associated with perceptions that they had let down family members by not continuing with their sport or achieving
their goals. In each instance the perceptions were not those of the family members involved, but rather of the athlete, and the relationships were marked by withdrawal and lack of communication on the part of the athlete. As a consequence of this lack of communication, it is plausible to assume that a failure on the part of the athlete to address their concerns with their parents may have exacerbated transition adjustments by introducing a negative influence that may not have been a perception shared by the family members involved.

With respect to disruption to the family unit as a consequence of an athlete returning to the family home, the experiences described by athletes and their parents generally indicated that disruption did not negatively impact on the parent-child relationship. The growth of independence associated with the Institute lifestyle caused some difficulties for athletes and parents during the initial stages of the transition process, but did not appear to have significant long-term ramifications for the family unit. In a small number of cases where the athlete experienced a very negative transition, the parent-child relationship was affected as a consequence of a breakdown in communication, and the athlete’s withdrawal and isolation during the transition process. These findings provide further evidence that withdrawal and failure to seek social support from family members, may hinder adaptation, particularly where an athlete returns to the family unit.

In relation to other sociological variables, socioeconomic status and ethnicity were found to be unrelated to transition reactions. Socioeconomic status was unlikely to be a contributing factor in this study given that the majority of athletes came from middle or high income families, and families were readily able to provide whatever financial support the athlete required during the transition period. Similarly, not all athletes returned to the family
home, thereby negating any influence of family socioeconomic status. In relation to ethnicity, it can be suggested that ethnic differences were not evident due to the multi-cultural nature of the Australian community, and equal opportunity access to education, sporting facilities, professional opportunities, and elite athlete assistance programs.

Finally, the results replicated the findings of Wylleman et al. (1993) in that females were more likely to experience difficult transitions than their male counterparts. The results of the study indicated no significant gender differences on any individual variables examined throughout the three different factors of the model, with the exception of a female attachment to mothers, and a small number of specific coping strategies. However, an overall gender difference was found in relation to transition reactions, with females more likely to experience a negative transition than males. One possible explanation is that the method used to measure the transition reaction resulted in the discrepancy, and therefore the differences must be considered with great caution. Another plausible explanation however, is that females may have exhibited slightly more adjustment difficulties on more variables than males, but not enough to either approach statistical significance, or to be clearly identifiable as a trend in the qualitative data. With a broader contextual basis to consider, the small differences may accumulate to create a significantly different overall affect, although the methodology of the study did not allow for such analysis to be conducted using reliable statistical procedures. Given that this is the case, no conclusions can be made from this study as to whether the gender of the athlete inhibited or assisted the transition process.
Social Support

Social support was found to be one of the most important resources in terms of assistance or hinderance to the adaptation process, with the results of this study providing further evidence to illustrate the benefits of social support in buffering stress reactions and assisting adjustment to a new environment (Greenberg, 1999; Lavallee & Wylieman, 2000; Moyles & Parkes, 1999). However, the role of social support was not simply related to the availability in the transition environment, but also a willingness on the part of the athlete to seek out and use the social support available, and the nature of the support provided.

A multitude of research findings, as reviewed in Chapter 6, have illustrated the pivotal role of internal support, and the results of this study provide further support for the role of parents and friends in providing emotional and instrumental support during the transition process. However, three distinct themes became apparent in relation to why some athletes were able to gain assistance through internal support, and other athletes were hindered in their ability to do so.

Firstly, athletes who had experienced a complete disruption to their peer networks experienced the most difficulty making adjustments during the transition. Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) previously indicated that athletes can become isolated, lonely and unsustained socially, as a consequence of the absence of an alternative social support network due to their involvement in elite sport. In this sample, athletes who were most at risk of experiencing difficulties were those who did not maintain friendships in their home environment because of their involvement in the residential program. They developed new and valued friendships whilst at the residency, and as a
consequence of the demands of that environment, spent little time fostering relationships that existed prior to their scholarship. When their residency came to an end, these athletes were faced with the prospect of a separation of social ties associated with the Institute, as well as a void in peer social networks in the transition environment. As a consequence, they were hindered in their ability to seek emotional support from peers, and also to engage in social activities in the transition environment. The lack of social support and reduced opportunity to engage in other activities were important aspects with respect to an available resource, given that the results indicated that social support and engaging in other activities, were coping strategies more likely to be used by athletes who had positive transition reactions.

The second theme that emerged in relation to internal support was an unwillingness on the part of athletes who experienced quite negative transition reactions, to seek out the social support available to them. Individuals who were most likely to exhibit negative psychological indicators over a protracted time, were those who undertook to deal with their transition experiences by themselves. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) previously indicated that ‘at risk’ athletes are often resistant to recognising their vulnerability, and therefore may not seek assistance, and this was certainly an issue that was identified in this study.

The results indicated that the nature of the support may also be of some consequence in considering whether athletes will access support that is available to them. Athletes in this sample who experienced a positive reaction were more likely to espouse the benefits of being able to share their experiences with athletes who had been through a similar transition. In contrast, athletes who had negative transition reactions were more likely to express doubts about
sharing their experiences with family members or non-Institute peers because they believed that they would not be able to understand what they were going through. This finding illustrates that social support could be a more effective resource if it is pertinent to the needs of the individual undergoing the transition. Generic social support, that is ‘just someone to talk to’, may not be as effective as having a support network that can cater for the specific needs and emotional responses associated with a transition away from an elite athlete environment or lifestyle.

Pearson and Petitpas (1990) concluded that “an additional individual-based barrier to the making of successful sport-related transitions may be found in the attitudes individuals hold toward asking for, and receiving, help from others” (p.9). Unlike their assumption that ‘rugged individualism’, perpetuated by the elite sporting culture, possibly resulted in this lack of desire to seek support, the evidence suggested that athletes in sample would have liked the support, but were not comfortable putting those thoughts into actions. Where support was not accessed it was generally because athletes had no peer support networks, and they felt that family members would be unable to understand their experiences and therefore there was no point in discussing their difficulties with them.

It may be that these athletes were concerned about expressing their difficulties because they assumed that their experiences were unique, and that others might dismiss their concerns, a notion supported by the observations of one female athlete:
I was always too afraid to ask the other girls ‘how are you feeling’ with their transition...I know I didn’t want to express how I was feeling because then someone might think, well why are you feeling like that. You’ve moved home and you should be fine. I suppose the pressure was on me because everyone else had done it before and got through the experience fine. So I was like, I’d look at them and think, well they’re okay now. But I’m starting to hear stories about when they first moved home and all the things that they used to do, and I’m thinking, man, I did it with a breeze when I came home.

In relation to external support, the results of this study replicated previous research findings indicating a general lack of support from institutional groups during a transition (Jackson et al., 1998; Menkehorst & Van Den Berg, 1997; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993; Wylleman et al., 1993). As indicated previously, athletes who received support from their coaches during the transition process expressed the benefits of having that connection whilst adaptation was taking place. Similarly, parents were overwhelming in favour of ongoing support for their children during the initial stages of the transition process. The results clearly indicated that athletes and parents believed that external support
provided by the residential institution, would have assisted the adaptation process.

However, one issue that did appear to be of some relevance was the degree to which the athlete is responsible for accessing external support when services are available. Athletes in the sample generally acknowledged that there were no practical barriers to prevent them from making contact with Institute staff to gain advice or assistance during the transition, however the majority of athletes appeared reluctant to do so. One plausible explanation for this reticence to seek external support may have been linked to the way in which scholarships were terminated. Insufficient information provided at the end of the residential period, and a lack of understanding or knowledge about what services athletes were entitled to access, may have increased anxiety or confusion about what assistance an athlete could request.

Another problem closely related to the issue of seeking social support, is that transition assistance is often an optional service that is made available to an athlete if it’s requested, rather than a mandatory part of the transition process. Given that athletes who experienced the most difficult transitions were the least likely to seek out social support, it could be argued that optional transition support is likely to be of no benefit to these individuals. Those most in need of assistance may be the least likely to ask for help, whereas compulsory transition programs may provide interventions that would not otherwise be accessed.

Of similar importance is who within the organisation would be the best suited to provide the support during the transition. The results indicated that athletes were reticent to seek professional help, or seek assistance from their coaches when faced with problem situations. Athletes who were interviewed generally expressed the view that institutional support would probably only be
effective if the athlete had some pre-existing relationship with the staff member who provided the follow-up support. However, given the findings relating to how negative coaching behaviours may have an impact on self-esteem and transition experiences, it cannot be assumed that the coach is the best individual to provide this support. Similarly, it cannot be assumed that the sport psychologist is necessarily in the best position to provide the emotional support required, if the athlete has had no prior relationship with that psychologist. The willingness of athletes to seek organisational support, therefore, may not simply be a matter of having that support available. The issue of who and how external support should be provided during the transition, is certainly of some significance for practitioners who are required to design and implement transition programs. Athletes in Hawkins and Blann’s (1996) study indicated a strong desire for career and education support to be made available to them after their careers had finished, not just while they are competing. It can be reasonably suggested therefore, that a similar approach may be beneficial with regard to other issues relating to transition adjustments.

Although the nature of social support may assist or hinder the adaptation process in various circumstances, it can be said with some certainty that, in this instance, availability and utilisation of social support was an influential variable in providing faster and more positive adaptations during the transition process.

Coping Strategies

The results of this study support Schlossberg’s (1981) theory that when an individual is faced with change associated with a transition, they will experience a certain level of stress associated with those changes, and therefore
will need to access coping resources. The fact that the positive, indifferent, and negative groups, all used coping strategies to some extent during the transition, provides further evidence that a transition event does elicit some degree of stress.

The results of this study also support the conclusions of Lazarus (1993, 1996) that most coping strategies are used in a stressful encounter, and that individuals faced with a stressful situation will use a mixture of emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies. There is also compelling evidence that the availability of varied and multiple coping strategies has some relationship to the level of adjustment difficulties experienced (Lavallee, 2000; Schlossberg, 1981; Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994), with a greater variety of strategies associated with better transition adjustment.

With regard to global coping patterns, the results replicated the findings of Frydenberg (1997) and Knapp et al. (1991) in that the adolescents in this group used emotion-focused strategies more often than problem-focused strategies. In contrast to Menkehorst and Van Den Berg (1997), this greater reliance on emotion-focused strategies did not indicate a higher risk of experiencing negative outcomes, with positive reaction athletes exhibiting a noticeable preference for emotion-focused strategies. These findings suggest that the nature of the situation may play a role in which type of coping strategy is most useful.
Lazarus (1993) contends that when "stressful conditions are viewed by a person as refractory to change, emotion-focused coping predominates; when they are appraised as controllable by action, problem-focused coping predominates" (p.239). Even though the majority of athletes chose the nature of their transition environment, there were still substantial elements of their environments that would have been refractory to change. Athletes who join a professional team, or return to the family unit, are likely to experience situational demands that are not within their control to alter, even if they desire it. As a consequence, coping strategies aimed at changing the way the athlete feels about the situation are likely to be more effective than attempts to change the environment. The results regarding the type of situations that caused adjustment difficulties, do indicate that many of the stress inducing variables were related to emotional adjustment associated with loss of friendships, and negative affect and thoughts associated with the Neutral Zone. As a consequence, it can be argued that many athletes in this sample may have viewed substantial parts of the event as refractory to change, and therefore focused their attention on manipulating their emotional state.

The results also support the notion that negative events are not the only type of situation to elicit a stress response, but that positive situations also have potential stressors (Greenberg, 1999). Lazarus (1996) maintains that "coping in positive situations has the function of preventing the negative, as well as sustaining the positive" (p.291). The results of this study did indicate a greater
use of strategies by the positive group, and as previously noted, a greater emphasis on emotion-focused strategies. It can be argued that this pattern is associated with a desire to prevent the negative, and sustain the positive as described by Lazarus.

This notion is further supported by the fact that positive reaction athletes exhibited a preference for emotion-focused strategies that would have helped them to feel more relaxed and happy about their circumstances, as well as exhibiting strategies that helped them to keep busy and get involved in other activities. Of particular relevance is the significantly higher use of humour and positive thinking during the transition. There is ample evidence to support the physiological and psychological benefits of humour, particularly in stressful situations. Research findings have indicated that laughter can improve immune functioning, decrease the incidence of anxiety and depressive symptomology, improve social functioning and interpersonal relationships, and promote the release of endorphins (Greenberg, 1999; Martin, 2001; Yip, 2000). Of similar importance is the role of positive self-talk in reducing the effects of anxiety and negative affect, and boosting self-confidence and self-esteem. There is indisputable evidence in favour of the benefits of positive self-talk, both in sport and non-sport situations (Cox, 1998; Williams, 1993). Given the benefits already established in the research literature, it can be reasonably assumed that an individual who ‘jokes and keeps a sense of humour’, and uses positive thinking when faced with a stressful situation, is at much less risk of
experiencing a negative reaction to that stressor. It also follows that they would also be at less risk of experiencing the negative affect associated with prolonged and difficult transition adjustments.

The one coping strategy that was used significantly more by the negative reaction group, was that of crying. Patterson and McCubbin (1997) classified crying as a coping strategy, and Lazarus (1996) classifies impulses as coping strategies because they are elicited in response to a stressor, even if they are maladaptive. As coping has been defined as an effort to manage specific internal or external demands that are appraised as taxing, it could be argued that crying is not essentially a coping strategy, but a manifestation of depressed mood and negative affect, and possibly a response to biochemical changes rather than as a means of coping with the stressful event. The concept of ‘effort’ denotes at least some conscious participation by the individual to choose the way in which the demands are met, and it can be argued that impulses associated with psychological disturbance may not be related to the effort to cope with the demands, but rather a response to the effort of coping with the demands. The results of this study cannot provide any evidence to support one view over the other, but it is an issue that lends itself to further investigation in coping research. Perhaps there is a need to understand further whether impulses, particularly those associated with depression or anxiety, are actually coping strategies, or instinctive responses associated with the physiological reactions of the stress response.

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The pattern of coping strategies before and during the transition event provided further support for Lazarus' (1993) contention that some strategies are more stable and consistent across different events than others. The residential environment and elite athlete participation are obviously situations that have the potential to elicit stress responses, and athletes in this study also encountered some degree of stress during the transition period. The pattern of coping before and during the transition, indicated that athletes generally used the same type of coping strategies in both situations.

Where differences in coping strategies existed between the two situations, the type of strategies suggested that the environment played a role in which type of strategies were available. Previous research has indicated that coping strategies may change as a consequence of situational factors (Sellers, 1995; Kavsek & Seiffge-Krenke, 1996), and it would seem apparent that the strategies that were used significantly more in the transition period were strategies that would have been more readily accessible in a non-regulated environment. Similarly, the results indicated that athletes had more time to relax and socialise during the transition period, and as a result would have had more time to engage in relaxing activities such as driving around in their car, going to the movies, or socialising with friends. The only activity that significantly decreased during the transition period was the use of relaxation methods such as massage, and this is no doubt related to accessibility. During residency the Institute athletes have free and easy access to massage and flotation tanks,
however in the transition period, these athletes may have been limited in their ability to access these type of resources due to financial or geographical considerations.

In relation to the least preferred coping strategies, the results of this study supported previous research findings that destructive or anti-social coping strategies were the least preferred responses to stressors (Grove et al., 1997; Jackson et al., 1998; Sinclair & Orlick, 1993). Not surprisingly, professional help was not sought by individuals in the positive or indifferent group, but it was of some significance that those in the negative group hardly ever sought professional assistance, particularly for those that suffered severe and prolonged reactions to the event. The unwillingness of this group of athletes to access professional help during difficult adjustments may possibly be explained by the nature of the termination of scholarships, and accessibility. The responses provided by athletes in regard to the way in which many scholarships were terminated, indicated that athletes felt that they were on their own once they were in the transition period. There was no contact from the organisation, and athletes generally felt uncomfortable about what help they were entitled to in relation to post-Institute services. This reticence to seek support from the professional staff at the Institute, and financial considerations related to access to professional help outside of the Institute program, probably resulted in professional help not being sought even when it was obviously required. It was evident from the results of this study that athletes who experienced quite
negative reactions would have appreciated some assistance, but that they were unwilling to access those services of their own accord. This unwillingness to seek professional help in the face of adjustment difficulties, is certainly an issue for consideration when designing and implementing transition programs.

The role of support during the transition period was of obvious significance, both from the experiences described by athletes, but also by the differences in social support patterns exhibited in the coping responses used during the transition process. Athletes in the positive reaction group were more willing to access social support from a variety of sources, in comparison to the negative group who only sometimes sought such assistance. It is of some significance that the results of this study indicated that athletes who were the most severely stressed did not seek out others for assistance and/or emotional support, contrary to previous findings (Pierce et al., 1996). Athletes who experienced difficulties tended to become withdrawn, isolated and lonely, and tended to re-establish support networks only after they had entered the discovery phase of the transition process. The evidence does suggest that coping strategies may be affected by the support systems available in the community (Gibson-Cline et al., 1996), with athletes who experienced disruption to their social ties in their transition environment being the least likely to access social support as a coping strategy.

In relation to gender, the results of this study replicated previous findings that adolescent males and females exhibit similar coping strategies in
response to a stressful event (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1991; Patterson & McCubbin, 1997). The fact that males and females differed significantly on only 2 out of 63 coping strategies during the transition period, indicates a strong argument that coping strategies are not gender specific. Even though females exhibited higher levels of crying, it may be that responses were affected by social desirability. Given the influence of cultural and social norms, it is reasonable to assume that crying may be perceived as being more socially acceptable for females than it is for males, or that females were more willing to admit that they cried.

Although the study provided some important information regarding the type of coping strategies preferred by athletes, the results do not provide any information about cause and effect. Even though positive reaction athletes used a greater variety of strategies more often than the indifferent or negative groups, it cannot be said whether the use of the coping strategies caused the athletes to have a more positive reaction, or whether their positive reaction enabled them to access and use a greater variety of strategies. What can be said with some certainty is that the coping pattern of the positive reaction group differed substantially from those of the indifferent and negative reaction groups.

Finally, the results also provide no indication of how coping strategies varied over the transition period. The evidence provided in relation to the transition process shows that there is a change in emotional and behavioural reactions over time, but this study did not allow for the measurement of changes
to coping strategies throughout the process. Investigation of the change in patterns of coping throughout the adjustment process, considered against eventual outcomes, would provide a clearer understanding of the role of coping strategies in managing specific stressors as they occur during the transition period.

The Transition Model

A review of the individual results, placed in the overall context of Schlossberg’s et al. (1995) Revised Transition Model, clearly illustrates the complexity of a transitional event, and the usefulness of the model as a framework for describing the event. In contrast to the views of Sinclair and Hackfort (2000) that “despite great research and practical interest, the literature has not identified a consolidated theoretical framework from which to study athletic transition”, the researcher contends that Schlossberg’s revised model is a viable theoretical and practical framework that can be used to analyse transitions of any nature.

Perhaps the most obvious benefit of using the model is that the researcher or practitioner is able to consider the impact of a variety of intervening variables over time, rather than focusing on a small number of variables at a specific point in the transition process. The results of the study clearly indicate that reactions to the event were related to multiple variables that occurred at various times throughout the transition process, and that athlete
experiences differed greatly even though the nature of the transition event was the same. The framework also allows for different types of transition events to be considered using the same model, not just transitions events that result in career termination or disruption.

The viability of any theoretical model is obviously going to be measured in its usefulness in delivering psychological services to clients in real life settings. If consideration is given to the results provided in Figures 23 and 24, it is reasonably evident that a practitioner could use the format presented as a means of directing assistance for an individual about to embark on a transitional event. Although the limitations of this study, to be discussed in the next section, prevent conclusions being drawn that relate to other samples and populations, a purely hypothetical examination of therapeutic applications is useful to illustrate the benefits of the model approach.

A psychologist involved in the delivery of a transition program identifies an athlete who has low emotional stability and self-esteem, who is about to make a transition back to the family unit. After interviewing the athlete, the psychologist is aware that they have lost contact with friends from their home environment, and that close friendships formed in the residential setting will be affected because of the need to relocate interstate. The psychologist has identified the type of coping strategies that the athlete generally uses in response to stressful situations, and
given that many strategies are likely to be stable across different situations, has concluded that the athlete is likely to engage in emotion-focused strategies, development of self-reliance, and a desire to solve problems without the assistance of social support. Given this information, it could reasonably be expected that the athlete may be at some risk of experiencing transition difficulties, and the psychologist may then address the areas that have the potential to hinder the progress of the athlete. One month after the onset of the transition event, the psychologist contacts the athlete and discovers that they are still experiencing significant negative affect. The psychologist is aware that it is possible for negative affect to increase over time if adaptation is not progressing, and therefore the psychologist will be in a position to provide further intervention to reduce the likelihood of negative affect increasing, or continuing for a prolonged period of time.
One of the interesting findings of this study that provides some additional support for the usefulness of the model, is the issue of gender differences. It is an incontrovertible principle that the whole is the total sum of all its parts. If one subscribes to this principle in a psychological context, then it can be reasonably argued that in order to better understand the reactions and experiences of an individual undergoing a transitional event, one must not just look at the individual variables present, but also the cumulative effect of those variables. In order to do this, a researcher or practitioner must have some theoretical and practical framework through which those parts can be identified, measured and considered in their whole context.

The researcher contends that Schlossberg’s et al. (1995) Revised Transition Model goes some way toward achieving that goal. That is not to say that the model cannot be extended further, or that methods of measuring the relative impact and weighting of variables and interactions are sufficient at this time to use the model as a standardised predictive tool, but it can be argued that it provides a sound framework from which to further develop these principles.

Limitations

Although the results of this study provide a complex illustration of a transitional event, there are a number of limitations that must be acknowledged when considering the implications and conclusions. Firstly, the uniqueness and size of the sample prevents generalisations to a broader population. The size of
the sample was limited due to the difficulty in tracing individuals following their move out of the residential program. The response rate was probably further influenced by the size of the original questionnaire forwarded to participants, and the volume of information that was required.

In relation to the impact of sample uniqueness and size on results obtained, some findings from previous research were replicated in this study, other variables that have been found to influence transitions were not evident, and it may be that the uniqueness or size of the sample influenced these findings. Similarly, the age of the participants is likely to have had some impact on the reactions experienced, with different results possible if an adult sample was examined.

Another limitation of the study was the retrospective nature of the data collection process. Retrospective research has some benefits in that it allows the participants to engage in greater reflection of their experiences over a period of time. However, the difficulty associated with that same process is that perceptions can change over time, perhaps leading to distorted recollections of what actually occurred. Similarly, the importance or degree of impact ascribed to certain events or experiences, may change over time as a consequence of intervening events in the post-transition period.

From a methodological point of view, the limitations of the study are inherent to the multi-method and correlational design of the study. The multi-method approach allows the researcher to explore experiences and findings that
fall outside the normal realms of a singularly quantitative approach, thereby providing a more expansive view of the event. However, it also lends itself to the influence of the predilections of the researcher in terms of interview content and interpretations of findings, thereby limiting the generalisations and comparability of the study. The correlational nature of the study also provides some limitations for the use of the data because it neither predicts nor shows cause in relation to individual variables and transition reactions. Although the results of the study allow the researcher to gain an overview of the experiences of these particular athletes, they do not indicate whether the differences between positive and negative experiences were caused by the variables indicated, or whether they can predict similar outcomes for athletes in the same situation. All one can say is that there is some relationship between reactions to the event, and the variables that assisted or hindered the athletes in their adjustment process.

Finally, one of the aims of this study was to investigate the usefulness of using Schlossberg's et al. (1995) revised model to investigate the relationship between transition reactions and individual variables within the model. Given the complexity of such an aim, and the volume of data to be collected and analysed to achieve that aim, an interactional approach was not considered viable as part of the analytical process for this specific study. The model and the collection of data certainly lends itself to analysis of variables from both an individual and interactional perspective, and as a consequence would provide an even more detailed explanation of the event. The researcher acknowledges that
investigation of individual variables, without consideration of the interactional effect, limits the conclusions that can be made regarding the role of the model variables in a broader context. However, the lack of statistical analysis for interactional effects does not diminish the value of understanding the role of individual variables throughout the transition process.

One final limitation relates to the use of the model to guide data collection and analysis. The study could be viewed as a confirmatory rather than an exploratory process, which precludes the development of a new or extended model of a transition experience based on the data collected. However, the researcher contends that further studies need to be conducted using diverse samples, and multiple methods and variables, before more elaborate models can be developed.

Future Considerations

Although it was not within the scope of this study to examine all the viable interactions within the model, future research projects should involve analysis of individual variables and interaction of variables, in order to gain a more comprehensive overview of a transitional event. Given the complexity of real life events, it would seem prudent that repeated analysis be conducted focusing on individual and interactional effects within Schlossberg’s et al. (1995) revised model, in order to augment understanding in relation to the total transition experience, as well as with regard to isolated effects.
A replication of this study using a longitudinal approach would also overcome some of the limitations previously indicated. Research that identifies individuals prior to the transition event, and then follows progress through the transition process using quantitative and qualitative methods, is likely to provide the most comprehensive and accurate representation of individual experiences. Similarly, a longitudinal study using a control group of subjects, would enhance the overall validity of the research findings.

The opportunity also exists to conduct research using comparable situations and diversification of samples, for instance boarding schools and other non-sport residential environments, to determine if there are any similarities to the transition reactions experienced by the athletes in this sample. Although age was not found to be a significant indicator in this particular study, it can be reasonably argued that even in similar situations such as the termination of a residential scholarship, adolescents and adults may differ in their adaptation responses. Similarly, cross-cultural studies of residential programs and transition programs, using the same methodological framework, would provide more detail as to the cultural and situational determinants of transition reactions. More sport specific research could also be directed toward comparison of transitions in various sports to determine if cultural or organisational factors that may be inherent to a particular sport, have any bearing on the transition experiences of the athletes involved.

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Another important area for consideration is the extension of research methodologies to include the reflections of other individuals who are part of the transition environment. Information gleaned from significant others who are directly linked to the transition process, particularly family members, partners, coaches and friends, would help to provide different perspectives and a more complete picture of an individual’s transition experience. As one athlete in this study noted, “I thought that I handled the situation quite well (the transition). But my mum tells me otherwise.” Involvement of significant others in the research process will also allow for the development of a more extensive knowledge base regarding the impact transition events have on other individuals directly involved in the process, which could in turn have significant implications for the design and implementation of transition programs.

The rich source of information provided by athletes in the qualitative results of this study provide a compelling argument for the continued use of multi-method data collection processes in future research designs. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods allows the researcher to consider experiences that do not fall within the boundaries of statistically significant results. Although there is an obvious need to have statistical rigor and support for making conclusive statements, there is also a need to consider the experiences of individuals who may not ‘fit’ the normal profile. In any real life event, the experiences of the small percentage who fall at either end of the continuum are just as valid as the experiences of the majority, and are of vital
importance for practitioners involved in the development and implementation of transition programs.

Finally, one of the most important considerations for future research in the area of transitional events, is the development towards a more complex approach to the collection and analysis of data. One of the difficulties with previous research in this area has been the emphasis on the use of Schlossberg’s (1981) original model, and other transition models, to present research results from various sources within the model framework, rather than an emphasis on using the models to collect data on all of the variables. The benefits of collecting detailed information on individual variables is indisputable, but there is also a necessity to consider real-life events in the true complexity in which they occur. One of the challenges for researchers, therefore, is to develop methods of collecting complex information that are both manageable and replicable.

The current study was undertaken with the aim of looking at the effectiveness of a multi-method approach to measure the complexity of a real life event, but the researcher acknowledges that the process associated with the collection of data in this study highlighted a number of difficulties inherent in such a task. Results, methodological issues and limitations associated with this study are indicators of areas for attention and improvement in future research. However, the findings do provide some compelling evidence for the need to continue working towards development of multi-method approaches using the
model framework, for both investigating transitional experiences and developing effective transition intervention programs. If improvement, standardisation, and replication in research design can be achieved, it may in turn lead to more sophisticated statistical methods of predicting transition reactions for certain situational demands, given a formula of resources available to an individual at the time the transition occurs.
Chapter 16

Conclusion

The overall aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of the transitional experiences of adolescent athletes following their involvement in an elite residential program. The results of this study clearly provide a unique and thought-provoking insight into the type of transition reactions and resources that were influential in the experiences of these particular athletes.

The study was successful in identifying specific relationships between transition reactions and factors relating to the approach to the transition, the adaptation process itself, and the resources that assisted or hindered an athlete’s adjustment to their change in circumstances. As a consequence, the results add to the wealth of information already existing relating to transition experiences, by providing a more complex overview of a real life event. Although the results are limited in their applicability to other situations and populations, the information provides further evidence of the role of individual variables in a transition event.

In relation to the incidence of negative and positive reactions to a transitional event, it can be concluded that any change in circumstances has the potential to elicit a stress response, and in this particular situation, athletes were just as likely to react positively or negatively to those stressors. It can also be concluded that a transitional event does not necessarily have to result in
adjustment issues, with some athletes in this sample displaying brief and non-threatening transitions.

What can be stated with some certainty, is that a combination of psychological, physiological, sociological and situational variables do exist in any given transitional event, and that individual variables, and combinations of variables, are likely to either assist or hinder the adaptation process. Although replication of this research may find that the importance or relevance of individual variables may alter depending on the study sample or transition event, it can still be argued that examination of multiple variables is likely to result in a more comprehensive understanding of an individual’s experience. If replication is undertaken using a similar approach, it may be possible to make more definitive conclusions about the relative importance or otherwise of certain variables. This information will in turn provide practitioners with a greater knowledge base from which they can design and implement effective transition programs for athlete and non-athlete populations.

With regard to the findings of this study in relation to the impact of residential programs, the results clearly provide some interesting perceptions about the influence and responsibilities of sport organisations and coaches, particularly when dealing with adolescent athletes. It was obvious from the experiences of these athletes that individuals involved in the delivery of sport programs, particularly those dealing with individuals undergoing an important
development stage of life, should be mindful of the impact that they can have on the future prospects and emotional well-being of their charges.

Although the long term impact of negative experiences may only significantly impact on a small number of individuals involved in elite programs, that does not obviate sport organisations from a responsibility to protect the emotional welfare of all participants involved in such programs, even those who may be pre-disposed to psychological disorders or emotional instability. The researcher contends that it is insufficient to assist athletes with the pursuit of their dreams in such an engrossing way, if that assistance is suddenly terminated when an athlete ceases to be a part of, or of value to, the organisation or coach.

When considering the effectiveness of a transition program, or the value of providing adequate funding to establish a structured program, an organisation needs to assess the ultimate goal of their institutional program. This is true whether the organisation is an elite sporting institute, a boarding school, or any elite performance residential program that engrosses the individual in a particular lifestyle. If the purpose of the program is to provide individuals with knowledge and skills designed to enhance their performance in a particular field of endeavour after they have left the structured environment of a residential setting, then the program has not fulfilled its potential if that individual fails to utilise that learning in a different environment. If transition difficulties interfere with an individual’s ability to transfer the knowledge and skills acquired in the
residential program, then the program is ultimately undermining the gains that may have been achieved whilst the individual was part of the system. If this is the case, and it would seem to be indicative of some of the experiences of the athletes involved in this study, then a well-designed transition plan will only serve to increase the possibility of individuals transferring their knowledge and skills in a more effective way, thereby enhancing the overall outcomes of the institutional program.

One area that also needs to be considered, and which requires greater investigation, is the role of the coach in the transition process of elite athletes. Further investigation is needed into how coaches perceive their role during a transition event, and potential barriers that may hinder a coach’s desire or ability to provide support during the debriefing and adaptation process. Organisations not only have a responsibility to provide support for the athletes involved in such a program, but also support for the needs of the coaches who are required to interact with and guide the athletes under their care. It can not be assumed that all coaches employed within residential programs have the knowledge or skills to assist an athlete with a transition event, and therefore development of transition programs need to involve an understanding and assessment of the needs and skills of coaches and other support staff.

Another important issue to consider in relation to the efficacy of residential programs, is the role of parents, particularly where young adolescents are involved. The evidence from this study clearly illustrates that
there are benefits in keeping parents involved in a child’s progress, even at an elite level, to ensure that residential programs or elite sport programs do not disrupt attachment bonds to significant others. The results indicated the importance of parents in the overall well-being of adolescent athletes, and as such they should be acknowledged and embraced as an important part of an adolescent athlete’s development. That is not to say that finding the right mix between involvement and interference is easy, but isolating parents from the continued welfare of their children is not necessarily in the best interests of the long-term parent/child relationship. After all, this relationship will exist long after the sport and the coach, are no longer a part of the athlete’s life.

More research needs to be conducted to examine the impact on the parent/child relationship as a consequence of involvement in residential programs during the adolescent years, and effective ways for parents to be integrated into the organisational support structure. Once again, if organisations do not value the emotional and practical support that parents can provide for their children, they may be interfering with an individual’s ability to maximise their potential both during and after their involvement in the program. Involving parents and keeping them well informed about practical and emotional issues relating to their child’s welfare will; assist in reducing parental concerns; provide parents with a gradual exposure to individual changes that might occur as a consequence of involvement in residential program; and provide a valuable source of information from which institutional staff can learn more about
personality and relevant historical issues that have the potential to influence an individual's adaptation and performance.

Finally, the researcher concludes that Schlossberg's et al. (1995) Revised Transition Model proved to be an effective tool for directing the collection and analysis of the research data for this particular study, and further contends that the model is a viable tool for investigation of transition events of various origins and manifestations. Extension of the model to include replicable methods of measurement, and determination of weighting of variables, would provide an invaluable resource for both transition researchers and practitioners. The researcher concurs with Schlossberg's et al. (1995) contention that:

"the transition model provides a systematic framework for counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other helpers as they listen to the many stories - each one unique - of colleagues, friends and clients. The transitions differ, the individuals differ, but the structure for understanding individuals in transition is stable." (p.26)
In conclusion, the investigation of the experiences of this unique group of individuals provides an informative and illustrative example of the complexity of a transitional event. The results of the study provide further support for many findings previously reported in the literature, but also highlighted conflicting results and unique experiences that add to the existing knowledge base. As previously indicated, the goal of the contextual triangulation approach is not to achieve the impossible, a complete picture, but rather an investigation that allows for the interpretation of data that is both consensual and conflicting (Tindall, 1994). However, just as Tindall (1994) suggests that in the final analysis we may be made more aware of gaps in our understanding, this study highlights a number of areas that require greater investigation before we can begin to fully understand the impact of a residential program on adolescent development, and the role of transition programs in assisting athletes to fulfil their potential in post-institutional environments.
References


Levey, R. E. (2001). Sources of stress for residents and recommendations for programs to assist them. Academic Medicine, 76, 142-150.


Appendix A

An Exploration of Athlete Experiences Following Involvement in an Elite Residential Program

A Transitional Event

SURVEY

Researcher: Sharon Burden

A project conducted with the co-operation of the Department of Sport Studies, University of Western Sydney and the Australian Institute of Sport under the supervision of Associate Professor Patsy Tremayne and Mr Clark Perry
The following survey contains questions relating to yourself, your family environment, and experiences you encountered during and after your involvement in the residential program. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, and everyone will have different responses. Please feel free to add comments or additional information anywhere on the form if you think a question does not adequately represent your thoughts.

Thankyou for your time and support.

Information regarding your name and/or sport are optional. You may wish to fill in the details regarding your sport only, or your name and sport, for use in the research project. Your name will not be provided to any other persons, or cited in the research paper, unless you sign the ‘Notice of Agreement to Disclose Identity’ attached to the information letter.

Name (Optional): ________________________________ Sex (please circle): Male / Female

Year of birth: ______ Ethnic background: ________________________________

Sport for which you obtained your scholarship (Optional): ________________________________

Age at which you entered the residential program: ____ Age at which you left the residential program: ____

How long did you live in residence whilst on scholarship? ____ years ____ months

How many home visits did you have during your residency? ________________________________

Would you liked to have had more home visits? (please circle one response) Yes Maybe No

Where did you live immediately prior to entering the program? (Please circle one response for each question)

1. a) City  b) Large regional town  c) Small country town  d) Other (please specify) __________

2. a) Family home  b) Sharing with friends  c) Living alone  d) Boarding school  e) Sport institute
   e) Other (please specify) _______________

In your opinion, what was your financial position (or that of your family) prior to entering the residential program? (Please circle one response)

a) Low income  b) Middle income  c) High income

What were you doing prior to entering the residential program? (Please circle)

a) Full time school  b) Full time athlete  c) Full time employment

d) Part time employment  e) Full time university/college  f) Part time university/college

g) Unemployed  h) Other (please specify) __________________________
The following questions relate to your personality. When answering these questions please think back to how you felt at the time you were leaving the residential program. Try to respond based on your memories of how you were thinking, feeling and behaving at that time.

The following are a series of statements that are more or less true (or more or less false) descriptions of you at the time of leaving the residential program. Please respond by circling one number for each of the statements, where:

1 = Definitely False
2 = Mostly False
3 = More False than True
4 = 5 = 6 = 7 = 8 = More True than False

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<td>I was usually pretty calm and relaxed</td>
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<td>I considered myself to be an athlete</td>
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<td>I was never able to think up answers to problems that hadn’t already been figured out</td>
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<td>Overall, I lacked self confidence</td>
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<td>I had many goals related to my sport</td>
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<td>People were always able to rely on me</td>
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<td>I worried a lot</td>
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<td>I was good at combining ideas in ways that others had not tried</td>
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<td>Most of my friends were athletes</td>
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<td>Overall, I was pretty accepting of myself</td>
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<td>I felt that people were always judging my sporting ability and success</td>
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<td>I was happy most of the time</td>
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<td>Sport was the most important part of my life</td>
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<td>I wished I had more imagination and originality</td>
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<td>I spent more time thinking about sport than anything else</td>
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<td>I was anxious much of the time</td>
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<td>I enjoyed working out new ways of solving problems</td>
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<td>I needed to participate in sport to feel good about myself</td>
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<td>I was not much good at problem solving</td>
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<td>I tended to be highly-strung, tense and restless</td>
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<td>Other people saw me mainly as an athlete</td>
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<td>I felt bad about myself when I did poorly in my sport</td>
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<td>I was not very original in my ideas, thoughts and actions</td>
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<td>Overall, I had pretty positive feelings about myself</td>
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<td>I was inclined towards being an optimist</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was often depressed</td>
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<tr>
<td>I had no interest in being an inventor</td>
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<tr>
<td>I thought that no one else could understand how I felt</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I was not very accepting of myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoyed doing activities that did not involve my sport</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would get (or would have been) very depressed if I were injured and could not compete</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I had pretty negative feelings about myself</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tended to be a very nervous person</td>
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<tr>
<td>I could often see better ways of doing routine tasks</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I did lots of things that were important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to understand other people's thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For the following statements, can you describe how much you agree or disagree with the statement, where:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Moderately Agree</td>
<td>Slightly Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree</td>
<td>Moderately Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I felt really successful when…………………………………………………. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
<p>| others couldn’t do as well as me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| others messed up and I didn’t | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| something I learned made me want to practice more | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I could keep practising hard | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I could goof off | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I did better than my friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I was the best | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I was the only one who could do the skill | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I worked really hard | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I beat the others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| My friends and I helped each other to improve | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I got the knack of doing a new skill | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I learned a new skill by trying hard | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I was more skilled than other people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I didn’t have anything tough or hard to do | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| a skill I learnt, really felt right | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I did something I couldn’t do before | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I had the highest score | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I did my very best | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| My friends and I helped each other do our best | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I didn’t have to try | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree</th>
<th>Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I felt successful because:</td>
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<tr>
<td>I reached a goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was seen as a good performer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I showed my worth (importance) to others</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did something new and different</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pleased people who were important to me</td>
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<tr>
<td>I met the challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>I completed something</td>
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<tr>
<td>I showed how clever I was</td>
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<tr>
<td>I made other people happy</td>
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<tr>
<td>I showed I was a leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>my performances made me feel good</td>
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<tr>
<td>I did something few other people have done</td>
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<tr>
<td>other people told me I did well</td>
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<tr>
<td>it was like an adventure</td>
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<tr>
<td>People succeed if:</td>
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<tr>
<td>they are better than others at tough competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>they have the right clothes and equipment</td>
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<td>they are just lucky</td>
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<tr>
<td>they always do their best</td>
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<tr>
<td>their coaches think that they will do well</td>
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<tr>
<td>they work really hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>they are born natural athletes</td>
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<td>they like improving</td>
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<td>they like to practice</td>
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<td>they like to learn new skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>they help each other learn</td>
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<td>they try things they can’t do</td>
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<td>they pretend they like the coach</td>
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<tr>
<td>they know how to cheat</td>
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<tr>
<td>they know how to make themselves look better than they are</td>
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<tr>
<td>they know how to impress the coach</td>
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<tr>
<td>they are better athletes than the others</td>
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<tr>
<td>they always try to beat others</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I was competing:</td>
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<tr>
<td>I felt like I was the focus of everyone’s attention</td>
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<tr>
<td>I felt like I was special and unique</td>
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<td>When I was training:</td>
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<tr>
<td>I felt like I was the focus of everyone’s attention</td>
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<tr>
<td>In non-sport situations:</td>
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<tr>
<td>I felt like I was the focus of everyone’s attention</td>
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<td>I felt like I was special and unique</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
When you had a successful performance in your sport, what did you usually attribute that success to?

When you had a poor performance in your sport, what did you usually attribute that poor performance to?

When you had a successful performance in other activities (e.g., academic, work), what did you usually attribute that success to?

When you had a poor performance in other activities (e.g., academic, work), what did you usually attribute that poor performance to?

For the following statements which refer to ‘parent’, ‘mother’ or father’, please answer in relation to the people who were the most important caregivers, whether it was a natural parent, step-parent, or guardian.

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<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>Mostly False</td>
<td>More False than True</td>
<td>More True than False</td>
<td>Mostly True</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>Definitely True</td>
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<tr>
<td>I hardly ever saw things the same way as my parents when I was growing up</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to bring up children of my own like my parents raised me</td>
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<tr>
<td>I still have many unresolved conflicts with my parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>My parents have usually been unhappy or disappointed with what I have done</td>
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<tr>
<td>My values are similar to those of my parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>My parents have never had much respect for me</td>
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<tr>
<td>My parents treated me fairly when I was young</td>
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<tr>
<td>It has often been difficult for me to talk to my parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>My parents understand me</td>
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<tr>
<td>I like my parents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>I could count on my father to help me out if I had some kind of problem</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My father kept pushing me to do my best in whatever I did</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When my father wanted me to do something, he never explained why</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>My father often praised me for my efforts</td>
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<tr>
<td>My father kept pushing me to think independently</td>
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<tr>
<td>My father wouldn’t spend a lot of time talking to me</td>
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<tr>
<td>My father always encouraged me when I was doing badly</td>
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<tr>
<td>My father never trusted my judgement</td>
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<tr>
<td>My father considered my point of view when we discussed things</td>
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<tr>
<td>My father expected too much from me</td>
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<tr>
<td>My father respected my feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>I could count on my mother to help me out if I had some kind of problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>My mother kept pushing me to do my best in whatever I did</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>When my mother wanted me to do something, she never explained why</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother often praised me for my efforts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother kept pushing me to think independently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother wouldn’t spend a lot of time talking to me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother always encouraged me when I was doing badly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother never trusted my judgement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother considered my point of view when we discussed things</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother expected too much from me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother respected my feelings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following questions relate to your involvement in the residential program:

Please circle any mental skills and/or relaxation methods that you used during your training and competition:
- a) Goal setting
- b) Mental imagery
- c) Progressive relaxation
- d) Centering
- e) Flotation tank
- f) Meditation
- g) Focusing skills
- h) Positive self talk
- i) Thought stopping
- j) Massage
- k) Pre-competition routines
- l) Distraction strategies
- m) Media skills
- n) Time management
- o) Other (please specify)

Which of the following best describes your Institute coach's style (you may tick more than one category):
- a) Authoritarian - a person who expects compliance, strict discipline, demanding, inflexible, assumes all responsibility for decision making, dominating.
- b) Democratic - a person who allows communication, shared decision-making responsibility, flexible
- c) Technical - emphasis on skill acquisition and improvement rather than outcome, open to new ideas
- d) Behaviourist - communication important, focus on effort not outcome, emphasis on reinforcement of behaviours through verbal or physical rewards.
- e) Humanistic - acknowledges, understands and responds to individual differences, sincere interest in athlete's personal needs, good communication

Please circle one response for each of the following questions:
How satisfied were you with your sport performance during your involvement with the residential program?
- a) Very satisfied
- b) Somewhat satisfied
- c) Unsure
- d) Somewhat dissatisfied
- e) Very dissatisfied

How satisfied were you with your personal life during your involvement with the residential program?
- a) Very satisfied
- b) Somewhat satisfied
- c) Unsure
- d) Somewhat dissatisfied
- e) Very dissatisfied

During your involvement in the residential program........................
- did you enjoy being in an environment with other elite athletes?
- were you able to make close friendships?
- did you feel that other elite athletes were better able to understand what you were thinking and feeling?
- did training with athletes of a similar ability make you feel happier?
- did living with athletes of a similar ability make you feel happier?
- did you feel more daily pressure because you were surrounded by athletes with similar levels of ability?
- did being around athletes of similar ability provide more motivation for you?
- Yes
- Maybe
- No

In relation to leaving the residential program......................
- was the move sudden?
- did the move occur at a time when you were expecting it?
- were you happy about leaving?
- did you feel prepared to deal with the change?
- Yes
- Maybe
- No

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Describe the reason/s why you left the residential program (eg. scholarship completed, injury, termination of scholarship, preference for non-residential living, etc.)

---

The following questions relate to what type of residential living, work, study and sport options you chose following your involvement in the residential program:

Which of the following type of residential setting did you choose (please tick):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Immediately after leaving the program</th>
<th>6 months later</th>
<th>1 year later</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented a house/unit by yourself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented a house/unit with friend/s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented a house/unit with stranger/s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another sporting institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University/college/school accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of the following sport options did you choose (please tick):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Immediately after leaving the program</th>
<th>6 months later</th>
<th>1 year later</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training and competing at same/higher level in your sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and competing at lower level in your sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and competing socially in your sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training but not competing in your sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No training or competing in your sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of the following work/study options did you choose:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Immediately after leaving the program</th>
<th>6 months later</th>
<th>1 year later</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional athlete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time coach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time coach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time student - university/college</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time student - university/college</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time student - high school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time student - high school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What factors helped you to decide on the type of living arrangement you wanted after leaving the program?

What factors helped you to decide on the level of future involvement in your sport?

What factors helped you to decide what career and/or study options to choose?
For the following questions, can you please respond based on your memories of what you think you did and felt in the period immediately after leaving the residential program. These questions relate to physical and emotional responses and behaviours at that time.

After leaving the residential program did you...

- increase the amount of food that you were eating?  Yes  No
- decrease the amount of food that you were eating?  Yes  No
- begin to eat more 'junk' food?  Yes  No
- follow the same type of diet as you were on at the Institute?  Yes  No
- cut down on the amount of carbohydrates you were eating?  Yes  No
- begin to drink more alcohol (socially or non-socially)?  Yes  No
- get more time to sleep?  Yes  No
- get less time to sleep?  Yes  No
- maintain the same amount of training hours and intensity?  Yes  No
- decrease training hours or intensity?  Yes  No
- increase training hours or intensity?  Yes  No
- spend more time socialising with friends or family?  Yes  No
- get more time to relax?  Yes  No
- get less time to relax?  Yes  No
- put on weight?  Yes  No
- lose weight?  Yes  No

Please tick if you experienced any of the following during the 12 months after leaving the residential program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>First Month</th>
<th>3-6 Months</th>
<th>6-12 Months</th>
<th>First Month</th>
<th>3-6 Months</th>
<th>6-12 Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contentment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edginess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vigor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trembling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive worry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More relaxed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of helplessness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Renewed interest in sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed mood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased pleasure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of interest in sport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of interest in other non-sport activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Renewed interest in other non-sport activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of pleasure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced irritability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood swings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Better concentration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfying sleep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfying sleep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive thoughts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of guilt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pride</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue, tiredness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hope for future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor memory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved memory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of worthlessness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to sleep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of shame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of inadequacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding family/friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Procrastination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid thinking of future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Made plans for future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Did you experience any increase in physical problems (e.g. injuries, colds, allergies, headaches)? **Yes** **No**

If yes, can you briefly explain or list what those problems were:

---

The following is a list of behaviors that people can engage in when under pressure or stress. Beside each behavior are two scales which allow you to decide, on a scale from 1 to 5, how often you would use this particular behavior in response to daily hassles and stressful situations. There are two parts to the questionnaire. The first scale (A) allows you to indicate which of these behaviors you used in times of stress whilst in the residential program, and the second scale (B) allows you to indicate which of these behaviors you used when you left the residential program and moved into your new residence and lifestyle. Please circle one number on each scale, where:

1 = never  2 = hardly ever  3 = sometimes  4 = often  5 = always

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>A During your residency</th>
<th>B After leaving the program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Read</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tried to be funny and made light of it</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Apologised to people</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Listened to music</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Got professional counseling (e.g. psychologist)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ate food</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Talked to the coach about what was bothering you</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Used drugs prescribed by a doctor</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Got more involved in activities other than training</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Tried to reason with people and talk things out</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Went shopping, bought things you liked</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Used positive thinking</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Tried to compromise with people</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Cried</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Tried to improve yourself</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Used thought stopping</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Tried to think of the good things in life</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 = never  2 = hardly ever  3 = sometimes  4 = often  5 = always

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>During your Residency</th>
<th>After leaving the program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Spent time with a spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Drove or rode around in a car</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Said nice things to others</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Used mental imagery to solve problems</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Got angry and yelled at people</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Joked and kept a sense of humour</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Talked to a minister/priest/rabbi</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Used relaxation methods (massage, meditation etc)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Let off steam by complaining to family members</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Used mental imagery to escape your problems</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Went to church</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Used legal drugs not prescribed by a doctor</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Organised what you had to do (made plans, lists, etc)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Swore</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Worked harder at training sessions</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Blamed others for what was going wrong</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Tried to be close with someone you cared about</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Tried to help other people solve their problems</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Talked to your mother about what bothered you</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Figure out how to deal with problem by myself</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Worked on a hobby</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Took illegal drugs</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Talked to a friend</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Told yourself the problem was not important</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Went to a movie, club, sporting event etc</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Daydreamed about how you would like things to be</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Talked to a brother or sister about how you felt</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Gambled</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Did things with your family</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Smoked tobacco</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Watched TV or a video</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Prayed</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Tried to see the good things in a difficult situation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Drank alcohol</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Tried to make your own decisions</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Decreased sexual activity</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Said mean things to people, was sarcastic</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Talked to your father about what was bothering you</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Let off steam by complaining to your friends</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Reduced training intensity</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Became physically or verbally aggressive</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Reduced your eating</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Tried to keep to yourself, be alone</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>Increased sexual activity</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>Spent time with a pet</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>Slept</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Can you describe your experiences during the transition period after leaving the residential program, and what things did you find stressful, helpful, adaptive, etc, during this time.
The following questions relate to your family environment and relationships:

If you were living in the family home immediately prior to your involvement in the residential program, place a tick next to each family member who lived in your home at that time:

Mother____  Stepmother____  Father____  Stepfather____  Guardian/s____

Grandmother____  Grandfather____  Brother/s____  Stepbrother/s____

Sister/s____  Stepsister/s____  Other (please specify)_____________________

If you were not living in the family home immediately prior to your involvement in the residential program, how long had you been living away from the family unit?________________________________________

How many brother/s or stepbrother/s do you have?____  How many sister/s or stepsister/s do you have?____

What is your birth order?  (that is, are you the eldest, youngest, middle child etc)_____________________  

For the following questions which refer to ‘parents’, ‘mother’ or father’, please answer in relation to the people who were the most important caregivers, whether it was a natural parent, step-parent, or guardian.

How would you describe your mother’s style of parenting before you went to live at the Institute?  (Some things you might like to consider are the level and style of communication with you and your siblings, punishment, ways of showing affection, level of involvement and interest in your activities, involvement in family activities etc)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

How would you describe your father’s style of parenting before you went to live at the Institute?  (Some things you might like to consider are the level and style of communication with you and your siblings, punishment, ways of showing affection, level of involvement and interest in your activities, involvement in family activities etc)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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How would you describe your relationship with your siblings (brothers and sisters)? (Some things you might like to consider are the level and type of support or rivalry, did your parents treat you or your siblings differently, communication between yourself and your siblings, level of involvement in family activities etc)

Please circle one response for each of the following questions:

Do you think that your parents’ values influenced the choices you have made in the past?   Yes  Maybe  No
Do you think that your parents’ behaviours influenced the choices you made in the past?    Yes  Maybe  No

Do you think that your mother had expectations and goals for your sport achievements?  Yes  Maybe  No
If you answered yes or maybe, do you feel that you were able to satisfy those expectations? Yes  Maybe  No
Do you feel that your mother is disappointed with what you have achieved in your sport?   Yes  Maybe  No
Do you think that your mother considered your sport achievements to be more important than other things in your life (eg: school, relationships)  Yes  Maybe  No

Do you think that your father had expectations and goals for your sport achievements?   Yes  Maybe  No
If you answered yes or maybe, do you feel that you were able to satisfy those expectations? Yes  Maybe  No
Do you feel that your father is disappointed with what you have achieved in your sport?   Yes  Maybe  No
Do you think that your father considered your sport achievements to be more important than other things in your life (eg: school, relationships)  Yes  Maybe  No

Do you think that your parents’ goals and expectations for themselves or for you, influenced your decisions before, during or after your involvement in the residential program?

If so, how did it influence you, and did it have a positive or negative effect?
Did your siblings have any role to play in the choices that you made immediately before and after leaving the residential program? If so, how did they influence your decision making?

Did your peers/friends have any role to play in the choices that you made immediately before and after leaving the residential program? If so, how did they influence your decision making?

Was there any other person (other than parents, siblings or friends) who played a role in the choices that you made immediately before and after leaving the residential program? If so, how did they influence your decision making?

Who provided you with the most important support during the transition period? (Consider emotional, social and financial support)
Please feel free to make any further comments on this page regarding any of the issues raised in this questionnaire, or any other issues that you may wish to highlight that you feel are important in relation to residential programs, or your own experiences.
Appendix B

Letter of Introduction to Research Participants
(Originals presented on University of Western Sydney Letterhead)

Dear (athlete name)

I am writing in regard to a research project which I am currently undertaking as part of my PhD studies in sport psychology at the University of Western Sydney Macarthur. The research project is being conducted with the support of the Australian Institute of Sport, and has been approved by the respective ethics committees at the University of Western Sydney Macarthur and the Australian Sports Commission. The title of the project is “An Exploration of Athlete Experiences Following Involvement in an Elite Residential Program. A Transitional Event.”

This research project has been designed to investigate some important issues for athletes who make the decision to live in residence at an elite sporting institute, like the Australian Institute of Sport. To date there has been no detailed published research in the world as to what type of living arrangements athletes choose after they leave an institutional setting, how they cope with the transition period, what adjustment issues they have encountered, and what skills, personality traits and experiences were important in helping them to cope with the change of lifestyle. There is also no information relating to the impact on other family members if an athlete returns to the family home following a long term stay in an elite sport institution.

I am hoping that with the help of previous athletes at the AIS, like yourself, I can gain some valuable insight into the experiences of athletes during this time. The information collected will be used to develop a program and manual for use by athletes and their families, to help in preparation for the transition out of a residential program, and to provide some coping strategies which have proved useful for athletes who have already experienced such a transition.

Attached to this letter is a detailed questionnaire which has been prepared to help gather information on a number of important issues which are likely to effect an athlete’s experiences during the transition period. I am aware that the questionnaire is quite long, but I sincerely hope that you will consider taking the time to complete the survey. All the questions in the survey are designed to give a thorough overview of the role of your personality, family background and the AIS in relation to what happened when you left the residential program. Your personal experiences are very important in helping us to gain a better understanding of what happens to athletes after they leave the institute, and why they made the choices that they did. This information will be of substantial importance, not only for research and education purposes, but for all athletes who will participate in residential programs in the future.
If you do wish to participate you can complete the survey anonymously. You may choose to identify yourself or your sport, but this is optional. By completing the attached survey and returning it, you are providing your agreement to participate, and permission to use the information provided in your survey for a PhD Thesis and any published materials which arise from this work.

If you choose to provide details regarding your name, the information will remain confidential unless you sign the ‘Notice of Agreement to Disclose Identity’ attached to this letter. Any persons who agree to be identified will be sent a preview of any information to be used in the project for their approval before such information is included in the thesis. This will allow each participant an opportunity to reconsider their decision to be identified, and if you do not approve of the personal information selected for use in the thesis, your identity will remain anonymous.

You have also been provided with two envelopes. The completed survey, and any signed Notices, can be placed in the envelope marked “Survey” and sealed. This envelope can then be placed inside the stamped and addressed envelope also provided. The addressed envelope has an identification number in the top left hand corner. A list of identification numbers, without any name, will be given to the secretary at the Department of Sport Studies, University of Western Sydney Macarthur, so that she can mark off the returned surveys as they arrive. She will then place the unopened envelope marked “Survey” in my mail tray. This process ensures that I will have no way of knowing whose survey I am looking at. The original surveys will not be viewed by any person other than myself, or my Supervisor, Associate Professor Patsy Tremayne, and all the information collected will be stored in secure premises.

If you wish to participate in the survey, could you please attempt to return the questionnaire within a fortnight, and keep the information letter for your own records. You will be forwarded a summary of the results of the research project when all the data has been collected and analysed. If you do not wish to participate, it would be greatly appreciated if you could return the blank survey form in the envelope provided.

I am also interested in doing further interviews with athletes who would like to discuss any of the issues raised in the questionnaire. Any interviews would be conducted by myself at a place convenient for you. You would be required to provide a postal address or name in order for me to organise an interview, but any information that you provide during the interview is completely confidential unless you sign a ‘Notice of Agreement to Disclose Identity’, and no other persons will have access to the recorded material. If you agree to participate in an interview, you are free to withdraw from the research project at any time without explanation.
Further Research - Experiences of Athletes and Family Members When an Athlete Returns to the Family Home

I would also like to have the opportunity to gain some information specifically relating to the experiences of the athlete and their family members when an athlete returns to the family home after leaving the residential program. This information could be collected either through a questionnaire, or through an interview process. Questionnaires would be sent to an address nominated by yourself, but they would not require you to provide your name if you wish the results to remain anonymous. Any interviews would be conducted by myself at a place convenient for you and/or your family members. Attached to this letter is a form, “Contact Details for Interviews/Questionnaires” for your completion if you wish to participate in this stage of the research project. You would be required to provide a postal address or name in order for me to send either a questionnaire or organise an interview, but any information that you or your family provide during this process, is completely confidential unless you sign a “Notice of Agreement to Disclose Identity” at the time of the interview or questionnaire. You, and your family members, are free to withdraw at any time, without explanation.

If, after completing this survey, you think that you would be interested in participating in the second stage of the research project, I would sincerely like to hear from you. Attached to this letter is a Notice of Agreement to Disclose Identity, and permission notices to allow me to contact you if you wish to participate in the second stage of the survey. If you are under the age of 18 years, could you please ensure that you and your parents/guardians sign the Agreement to Participate form attached to this letter.

If, during the course of participating in this project, you experience any distress or desire to discuss any of the issues raised in the questionnaire, please feel free to contact me at any time (free of charge - reverse call). Any discussion will be completely confidential, and will not be used in any way, in relation to the project. If you have any queries regarding the project, or would like some more information regarding any of the questions that appear in the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time on (02) 9774 4753 (reverse charge), or by email at sharonburden@hotmail.com

I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration, and I hope that you will share your experiences with us.

Yours faithfully

SHARON BURDEN
B.A. (Sport Studies)  B.A. (Honours) Psychology
Student No. 942630
Department of Sport Studies, University of Western Sydney Macarthur
This research project has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Macarthur Ethics Review Committee (Human Subjects). Any complaints or reservations about this research may be directed to the Ethics Committee through the Executive Officer, Kokila De Silva, phone (02) 4620 3641. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Ethics Protocol No: 98/114
Supervisor: Assoc. Professor Patsy Tremayne, Sport Psychologist
          Senior Lecturer, Department of Sport Studies
          University of Western Sydney Macarthur
          Ph: (02) 9772 6568
          Email: p.tremayne@uws.edu.au
Appendix C

NOTICE OF AGREEMENT TO DISCLOSE IDENTITY

Project Title: An Exploration of Athlete Experiences Following Involvement in an Elite Residential Program. A Transitional Event.
Principal Researcher: Sharon Burden

This is to certify that I, ____________________________ have read the information provided in the Information Letter and the Survey, and hereby agree to identify myself on the questionnaire provided.
• I have been given an opportunity to ask whatever questions I may have had, and all such questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
• I understand that this information, and my name, may be used in a PhD Thesis, and in published documents related to this work.
• I have been advised that I will be sent a preview of the personal information which is to be used in the Thesis, and that if I do not approve of the use of such information, I am able to withdraw my consent to be identified, without explanation.
• I understand that I am also free to discontinue participation in the project at any time. If I choose to discontinue participation following the submission of the questionnaire, I can request for the copy of my questionnaire to be returned, and any information relating to that questionnaire to be deleted from the researcher’s records.

Signature of Participant (Athlete): ____________________________ Date: ______

Signature of Parent/Guardian (if the participant is under the age of 18 years)
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Date: ______

CONTACT DETAILS FOR INTERVIEWS/QUESTIONNAIRE

I ____________________________ would be interested in participating in an interview session regarding any of the issues raised in the Survey. I can be contacted at:

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

Phone: ____________________________ Email: ____________________________

I (and other family members) ____________________________ would be interested in finding out more about the questionnaire, or interview session regarding my/our experiences following my return home from the Institute. I can be contacted at:

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

Phone: ____________________________ Email: ____________________________
Appendix D

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE
(INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR ATHLETES UNDER 18 YEARS)

Project Title: An Exploration of Athlete Experiences Following Involvement in an Elite Residential Program. A Transitional Event.

Principal Researcher: Sharon Burden

This is to certify that I, ___________________________________________ hereby agree to (give permission to have my child) participate as a volunteer in an investigation being conducted by the University of Western Sydney Macarthur, with the co-operation of the Australian Sports Commission.

The investigation, and my (child’s) part in the investigation, has been fully explained by the information provided by Sharon Burden, and I understand the explanation. A description of the investigation has been provided, and I was able to read and understand the questionnaire before giving my consent.

- I have been given an opportunity to ask whatever questions I may have had and all such questions and inquiries have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that I am free to deny any answers to specific items or questions in interviews or questionnaires.
- I understand that I am (my child is) free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time.
- I understand that any data or answers to questions will remain confidential as to my (child’s) identity, unless I have signed the Notice to Disclose Identity attached.
- I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief, I have (my child has) no physical or mental illness or distress that would increase the risk to me (him/her) of participating in this investigation.
- I am (my child is) participating in this project of my (his/her) own free will, and I have (my child has) not been coerced in any way to participate.

Signature of Participant (Athlete): ____________________________ Date: _______

Signature of Parent/Guardian: ________________________________ Date: _______
Appendix E

Examples of Interview Questions

Approaching the Transition
Were you able to make friends while you were in the Institute program?
Did you find it difficult to leave your friends behind when your scholarship ended?
Did you feel homesick at all while you were at the Institute?
Do you think feeling homesick had any effect on you? Did it play any part in your
decision to leave your scholarship early?
Did it help to have contact with your parents during that time?
Were you able to keep in contact with your friends back at home?
How hard was it to go back home after being away, and to try and join up with friends
again?
Were you happy with the way in which your scholarship termination was handled?
Did you get any feedback from coaching staff about what you had done well, and what
you could continue to improve on?
Did the way your scholarship ended have any impact on you?
Did the way your scholarship ended have any impact on the way you felt about yourself
as a person or an athlete?
Do you think you would have made the same decisions in terms of the educational
choices that you made, if you had not gone into the scholarship program?
Did you make different choices for education because of the intense nature of the
training and commitment required in the residency?

The Transition Process
Can you give me some idea about what happened to you after leaving the Institute?
How were you feeling during the transition, and what sort of things were you thinking
about?
Can you think of anything that was particularly stressful or helpful that happened during
the transition time?
From the time you left the Institute, how long would you say it was before you had
adapted to your new lifestyle?

Situation
Do you think it helped knowing in advance when you’re scholarship was going to end?
Did not knowing what was going to happen with your scholarship make the situation
any more stressful for you?
How did it feel not to be an AIS athlete anymore?

Self
Do you think the injury that you had made any difference to the way you felt or acted
during the transition?
Did being in a residential environment with other elite athletes make you focus on seeing yourself as a full-time athlete, or did you look at other opportunities or possibilities?
Do you feel like you changed as a person while you were at the Institute?
Do you think the experience was positive or negative in terms of your development as an individual?
Do you think that your parents expected you to have changed so much while you were away at the Institute?
As parents, did you notice any changes in your child in comparison to what you remember from before they left for the Institute?
Did their return to the family home cause much disruption, or was it a fairly smooth transition?
How did you find moving back into the family home after the independence of the Institute lifestyle?
How did you find moving back into home after the fairly strict routines and rules you had at the AIS? (gymnasts).
How did you think your parents coped with you being home again?

Social Support
Did you talk much to your parents about your experiences or how you were feeling at that time?
Did you talk to any friends about what you were thinking or feeling during the transition?
Did you think that you received enough emotional or practical support from Institute staff during the time between when your scholarship terminated and when you left the residency?
Did you have any contact or support from anyone at the Institute after you left the residency?
Did anyone follow up with you after you left the program to see how you were going?
Would you have liked to someone to make contact with you at some stage?

Coping Strategies
What would you say was the most helpful thing that you did to help you through the transition?
Did you use any of your mental skills training to help you through the transition period?
Did you think about how you were going to cope with the changes, or did you just deal with them as they arose?

Ideas for Intervention
Do you have any suggestions about how the Institute can better help athletes when they leave the residential program?
Do you have any suggestions for other athletes who might be going through a similar experience?
# Appendix F

## Descriptive Statistics not Reported in Results Section

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
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<td>Age at the time of leaving the Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did move occur at expecting time?</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you happy about leaving?</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you feel prepared to deal with the change?</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>