Sustainable Careers of Athletes: Themes and Concepts Regarding Transition Theories Involving Athletes

Jeongwon Choi and Hyun-Duck Kim

1 Department of Health, Exercise & Sports Sciences, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131, USA; jchoi@unm.edu
2 Department of Sport Marketing, Keimyung University, Daegu 42601, Korea
* Correspondence: kingol@kmu.ac.kr; Tel.: +82-53-580-5514

Abstract: Athletes’ transition has been one of the crucial social issues for athletes, their families, and significant others. This study aimed to provide a thematic analysis of research on athletes’ transition, considering the widely adopted transition theories. That is, this study is designed to evaluate the models that describe athletes’ transition, published in peer-reviewed journals from 2000 to 2020 within the domain of sports and relevant areas. Ten articles were included in this qualitative method-based research, and the selected articles were analyzed using the text data-mining technique using Leximancer version 5.0. The results can provide a methodologically significant contribution to the study of athletes’ transition. In addition, this study provides some insights regarding sustainable careers to help athletes and advance future studies.

Keywords: athletes’ transition; career transition; text-mining; sustainable career

1. Introduction

Athletes’ transition out of sports is a crucial social issue for athletes, their families, and significant others. Many studies have examined the concept of athletes’ transitional experiences [1–3]. However, finding proper solutions for athletes themselves and administrators of athletic programs at academic institutions has always been controversial and challenging [1,4]. Studies have found that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletes experience great challenges and stress when faced with transitioning out of sports and moving onto the next stage of their lives [1,3–6]. Athletes retire from athletic life for reasons such as aging, deselection from the players’ list, sudden injuries and rehabilitation, and other social and financial reasons [7]. That is, retirement from athletic life sometimes occurs unexpectedly. When deciding on retirement, athletes consider various factors such as athletic identity, lifestyle, type of sport, and gender. Having a strong athletic identity has been found to lead to more positive outcomes when athletes face the reality of retirement [8,9]; however, many researchers have argued about the negative repercussions of strong athletic identities [3,4,6,10].

It is inevitable that athletes, regardless of sport type or level of participation, eventually retire from their athletic careers and move onto the subsequent phase of their careers. More specifically, they are faced with more than one transitional occasion during their athletic careers. This may happen when an athlete competes for a professional sport or event at an earlier career stage. In general, professional athletes have much shorter careers than non-professional athletes. Fewer than 2% of NCAA athletes can become professional athletes after their college careers [11]. In other words, 98% of NCAA athletes retire from sports during or after college. Most professional athletes retire from their sport during their mid to late 20s or early 30s. Since most athletes face transitional situations at an earlier stage of life, preparation and finding alternatives for their lives once their athletic careers are over is essential to avoiding any retirement crisis.
According to Schlossberg, transition can be defined as “an event or non-event that results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world that requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationships” [12] (p. 5). This kind of significant life event may change and affect one’s life, especially if it takes the form of a non-normative transition. Transitions may occur either normatively or non-normatively [13]. Normative transition is a predictable, expected, voluntary, and potentially planned situation, whereas a non-normative transition is uncontrollable, involuntary, and unexpected [10,13]. Athletes tend to feel more stress from non-normative transitions than normative transitions because they are less prepared for unexpected situations.

Psychologists have initiated several studies on athletes’ career transition fields [14,15]. Among the studies regarding athletes’ transition, some well-established theories have led them to be frequently cited by other researchers. The most representative study in the field was conducted by Schlossberg in 1981 [12]. According to Google Scholar, Schlossberg’s model [12] for analyzing human adaptation to transition has been cited around two thousand times in 2020. Since the study is considered one of the most widely accepted models for understanding the concept of “transition” in athletics and with regard to athletes, it has been adopted as a theoretical guideline for much of the qualitative research [2,3,16,17]. Along with Schlossberg’s model [12], Taylor and Ogilvie’s model [7] for analyzing human adaptation to transition, Stambulova’s sports career transition model [18], and Wylleman and Lavallee’s developmental model of transitions faced by athletes [19] have been widely used in studies on athletes’ transition.

The data analysis technique of this study, text-mining, has a considerable potential to more empirically analyze text data, especially in the field of social science including the sociological aspects of sport science. From the initial stage of this study, the authors fully understood the strengths and weaknesses of this text-mining technique and adopted it to verify thematic and conceptual issues of athletes’ transition and relevant constructs within the limited scope of this study.

Transition Models

Schlossberg’s model [12] of human adaptation to transition is one of the most widely used and commonly applied models in exploring athlete transitions. Schlossberg’s model consists of three major sets of factors that affect adaptation to transition (Figure 1): “(1) the characteristics of the particular transition, (2) the characteristics of the pre- and post-transition environments, and (3) the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition” [12] (p.5). The perception of a particular transition includes role change, affect, source, timing, onset, and duration [12]. For instance, “affect” refers to whether the outcome of a transition is positive or negative. The characteristics of transition environments include internal support systems, institutional support, and physical settings [12]. The last factor, characteristics of the individual, comprises psychosocial competence, gender, age, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, value orientation, and experience. The model explains that the outcome of the transition can be determined based on the interaction of the three factors.

Drawing on the sports literature, Taylor and Ogilvie [7] proposed a conceptual model of adaptation to career transition among athletes (Figure 2). This model identifies four leading causes of career termination: age, deselection, injury, and free choice. After deciding on retirement for these reasons, athletes are required to have new identities, relevant resources, and coping skills for adaptation to career transition. Based on an individual’s coping skills and resources for adaptation, the quality of adjustment can vary between two potential outcomes: healthy transition and transition distress or crisis. If an athlete possesses relevant adaptation resources, they can expect a healthy career transition after retirement. If not, the athlete can face career transition distress. When athletes experience career transition distress, they may experience psychological, occupational, familial, or social problems. In these cases, athletes need additional interventions for a healthy transition [7].
Figure 1. Conceptual model of adopted transition theory suggested by Schlossberg [12] for this study. The flow chart was modified from Schlossberg’s [12].

Figure 2. Conceptual model of adopted transition theory suggested by Taylor and Ogilvie [7]. The flow chart was modified from Taylor and Ogilvie’s [7].

In addition to the two models, Stambulova’s sports career transition model [18] and Wylleman and Lavallee’s developmental model of transitions faced by athletes [19] have been the most frequently cited and applied models in the field of athletes’ transition. Stambulova’s model predicted that athletes might face various demands and barriers that require them to use coping strategies [18]. Wylleman and Lavallee’s development model [19] explains a range of normative transitions that athletes may face across various categories, including athletic, individual, psychosocial, and academic-vocational levels. Stambulova’s and Wylleman and Lavallee’s models [18,19] have been used for transition research, primarily in studies outlining “within career” rather than “out of sport” transitions [20].

This study’s fundamental purpose is to analyze thematic and conceptual issues concerning athletes’ transition out of sport based on widely accepted theoretical backgrounds by adopting a text-mining approach. The researchers searched, compiled, and coded candidate studies that qualitatively verified athletes’ transition experiences while considering popular transition models as their interview guide or protocol. For more detail, this study is also designed to compare the models of athletes’ transition published in peer-reviewed journal articles from 2000 to 2020 within the domain of sports and relevant areas.
2. Methods

2.1. Article Selection

The article selection process used the following electronic databases: Google Scholar, ProQuest, PubMed, and SportDiscus. The following are the procedural details of article selection for this study. Articles accepted for this study met the following criteria: (1) published in peer-reviewed journals; (2) included keywords such as “athlete,” “athletic,” “sports,” “sport,” “career transition,” and “transition” in their abstracts and title statements; (3) the nature of qualitative research methods; (4) published in English; (5) adopted transition theory as their interview guideline. In other words, any article that accepted transition as a dominant focus or theme was selected. This initial search resulted in a sample of 14 articles from peer-reviewed journals. Two researchers thoroughly reviewed the content of the initially selected articles for topic relevancy, and any article that led to disagreement was excluded from the final analysis. Through the article selection process, 10 journal articles were selected for data analysis (Table 1).

Table 1. Description of Selected Articles and their Theoretical Models Adopted.

| Year | Authors | Published Journal | Title | Model |
|------|---------|-------------------|-------|-------|
| 2008 | Kadlcik and Flemr | International Review for the Sociology of Sport | Athletic career termination model in the Czech Republic | Taylor and Ogilvie |
| 2015 | Tshube and Feltz | Psychology of Sport and Exercise | The relationship between dual-career and post-sport career transition among elite athletes in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe | Taylor and Ogilvie |
| 2015 | Cummins and O'Boyle | Journal of Career Development | Psychosocial factors involved in transitions from college to post-college careers for male NCAA Division I basketball players | Schlossberg-Wylleman and Lavallee |
| 2015 | Roberts, Mullen, Evans, and Hall | Journal of Sports Sciences | An in-depth appraisal of career termination experiences in professional cricket | Taylor and Ogilvie-Wylleman and Lavallee |
| 2017 | Kaul | Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology | Involuntary retirement due to injury in elite athletes from competitive sport: A qualitative approach | Taylor and Ogilvie |
| 2019 | Andronikos, Westbury, and Martindale | Athens Journal of Sports | Unsuccessful transitions: Understanding dropout from the athletes’ perspective | Stambulova-Taylor and Ogilvie-Wylleman and Lavallee |
| 2019 | Hansen, Perry, Ross, and Montgomery | Journal of Sport Psychology in Action | Facilitating a successful transition out of sport: Introduction of a collegiate student-athlete workshop | Schlossberg |
| 2019 | Stokowski, Paule-Koba, and Kaunert | Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics | Former college athletes’ perceptions of adapting to transition | Schlossberg |
| 2020 | Smith and Hardin | Journal of Athlete Development and Experience | The transition experiences of division I and III collegiate athletes | Schlossberg |
| 2020 | Chroni, Pettersen, and Dieffenbach | Sport in Society | Going from athlete-to-coach in Norwegian winter sports: Understanding the transition journey | Schlossberg |

2.2. Data Analysis

The selected articles were analyzed utilizing the text data-mining technique using Leximancer version 5.0 (Leximancer Pty Ltd., Brisbane, Australia). Leximancer is a computer-assisted content analysis software that helps researchers discover phenomena from a large
volume of text data. That is, this analysis software helps reduce time and cost, as well as limiting human bias when analyzing text data [21]. The results given by Leximancer provide a set of concept maps based on Bayesian decision theory (i.e., a hierarchy of appearance and relational extraction [22,23]). This analysis software can process and extract textual data by verifying the contextual collocations of words in terms of co-occurrence, frequencies, weighted term classification, and the connections between keywords [22,24]. One of the most significant advantages of using analysis software is that it generates concept maps and themes that illustrate the level of connection between the keywords from the analyzed text [24]. None of the created concepts and themes are necessarily essential or meaningful; researchers must carefully assess the analysis, and find and report only significant concepts [25]. The analysis software created concepts by grouping connections into themes, which are displayed as colored circles (Figure 3). The circle’s size does not give a relevant representation of the importance of the theme, but the color of the themes reflects their prominence. For instance, the most important theme in the map is displayed in red, and the least important theme is colored purple. Furthermore, the analysis software results also revealed statistical information in line with graphical representations of themes and concepts (i.e., the number of counts and percentage of relevance for each of the concepts). Based on the theories used for the selected articles, the authors grouped them into three maps to analyze and compare the theoretical backgrounds.

![Figure 3](image-url)

**Figure 3.** Concept map based on articles that used Schlossberg’s model [12].

### 3. Results

The generated concept map (Figure 3) showed that the articles that used Schlossberg’s model contained 53 concepts split into 13 dominant themes. Unsurprisingly, the results showed that “athletes,” “athletic,” “collegiate,” and “experiences” were connected in the theme in red, which represented the most important theme on the map. “Collegiate” can be considered as one of the map’s important concepts because two of the selected studies were conducted with collegiate athletes as the participants. The second-most important theme, the lighter red circle, contained “transition,” “support,” “life,” and “sport.” Presumably, the term “support” is connected with other concepts in the theme because support is one of the crucial factors regarding athletes’ transition (See Table 2). Interestingly, “coaching” and “coaches” are linked to the important themes since interpersonal relationships between coaches and athletes are essential and contribute to the athletes’ development [26].
Table 2. Thematic and conceptual analysis results based on Schlossberg’s model [12].

| Concept       | Count | Relevance % |
|---------------|-------|-------------|
| transition    | 345   | 100         |
| sport         | 325   | 94          |
| athletes      | 316   | 92          |
| athletic      | 156   | 45          |
| career        | 145   | 42          |
| athlete       | 130   | 38          |
| college       | 124   | 36          |
| participants  | 105   | 30          |
| life          | 103   | 30          |
| coaching      | 101   | 29          |
| identity      | 101   | 29          |
| collegiate    | 97    | 28          |
| experience    | 89    | 26          |
| study         | 82    | 24          |
| coach         | 79    | 23          |
| support       | 76    | 22          |
| coaches       | 71    | 21          |
| sports        | 71    | 21          |
| experiences   | 69    | 20          |
| time          | 64    | 19          |
| retirement    | 57    | 17          |
| research      | 56    | 16          |
| student-athletes | 56   | 16          |
| elite         | 53    | 15          |
| model         | 51    | 15          |
| process       | 49    | 14          |
| role          | 47    | 14          |
| athletics     | 47    | 14          |
| positive      | 43    | 12          |
| work          | 43    | 12          |
| use           | 42    | 12          |
| transitions   | 41    | 12          |
| felt          | 39    | 11          |
| education     | 37    | 11          |
| level         | 37    | 11          |
| individual    | 36    | 10          |
| development   | 35    | 10          |
| skills        | 34    | 10          |
| team          | 34    | 10          |
| knowledge     | 33    | 10          |
| social        | 33    | 10          |
| resources     | 31    | 9           |
| data          | 31    | 9           |
| health        | 30    | 9           |

The generated concept map (Figure 4) showed that the articles that used Taylor and Ogilvie’s model [7] contained 48 concepts split into 14 dominant themes. From the 14 themes, “career,” “sport,” “transition,” “Taylor,” and “Stambulova” are captured in the most important theme. Unlike the results of studies that used Schlossberg’s model [12], “coping,” “family,” and “social” are considered important concepts in the map. This can be interpreted to mean that studies using Taylor and Ogilvie’s model [7] focus more on resources that can affect athletes’ transition. According to Taylor and Ogilvie’s model [7], athletes’ transition can improve with relevant coping skills and resources (See Table 3).
Table 3. Thematic and conceptual analysis results based on Taylor and Ogilvie’s model [7].

| Concept         | Count | Relevance % |
|-----------------|-------|-------------|
| career          | 160   | 100         |
| sport           | 155   | 97          |
| athletes        | 125   | 78          |
| retirement      | 110   | 69          |
| transition      | 83    | 52          |
| study           | 75    | 47          |
| athletic        | 71    | 44          |
| process         | 63    | 39          |
| social          | 62    | 39          |
| participants    | 62    | 39          |
| termination     | 51    | 32          |
| support         | 50    | 31          |
| elite           | 49    | 31          |
| data            | 46    | 29          |
| injury          | 43    | 27          |
| time            | 42    | 26          |
| life            | 39    | 24          |
| sports          | 38    | 24          |
| research        | 37    | 23          |
| coping          | 32    | 20          |
| athlete         | 31    | 19          |
| adaptation      | 30    | 19          |
| during          | 30    | 19          |
| example         | 30    | 19          |
| family          | 28    | 18          |
| factors         | 27    | 17          |
| researcher      | 27    | 17          |
| experiences     | 26    | 16          |
| post-sport      | 25    | 16          |
| model           | 24    | 15          |
| strategies      | 24    | 15          |
| used            | 24    | 15          |
| interview       | 23    | 14          |
| school          | 21    | 13          |
| interviews      | 20    | 12          |
| studies         | 20    | 12          |
| analysis        | 20    | 12          |
| models          | 19    | 12          |
| retired         | 19    | 12          |
| questions       | 18    | 11          |
| participant     | 17    | 11          |
| development     | 17    | 11          |
| significant     | 16    | 10          |
| sports and sport| 14    | 9           |

Figure 4. Concept map based on articles that used Taylor and Ogilvie’s model [7].
The generated concept map (Figure 5) showed that the articles that used multiple models contained 53 concepts split into 12 dominant themes. From the 12 themes, “athletes,” “transition,” “sport,” “career,” and “development” are captured in the most important theme. The multiple models used by the articles in their studies include Wylleman and Lavallee’s and Stambulova’s transition models [18,19]. In this sector, “development,” “professional,” and “elite” have been considered important themes (See Table 4).

Table 4. Thematic and conceptual analysis results based on multiple models

| Concept          | Count | Relevance % |
|------------------|-------|-------------|
| athletes         | 154   | 100         |
| transition       | 153   | 99          |
| sport            | 147   | 95          |
| career           | 136   | 88          |
| participants     | 105   | 68          |
| study            | 86    | 56          |
| development      | 69    | 45          |
| retirement       | 69    | 45          |
| level            | 68    | 44          |
| athletic         | 65    | 42          |
| college          | 65    | 42          |
| research         | 63    | 41          |
| transitions      | 60    | 39          |
| factors          | 53    | 34          |
| professional     | 53    | 34          |
| experiences      | 51    | 33          |
| elite            | 50    | 32          |
| support          | 48    | 31          |
| process          | 48    | 31          |
| basketball       | 38    | 25          |
| social           | 38    | 25          |
| senior           | 37    | 24          |
| during           | 37    | 24          |
| cricket          | 37    | 24          |
| retrospective    | 34    | 22          |
| successful       | 34    | 22          |
| life             | 34    | 22          |
| lack             | 33    | 21          |
| athlete          | 33    | 21          |
| players          | 33    | 21          |
| reported         | 32    | 21          |
| analysis         | 30    | 19          |
| identity         | 29    | 19          |
| time             | 29    | 19          |
| experience       | 28    | 18          |
| data             | 28    | 18          |
| termination      | 27    | 18          |
| team             | 27    | 18          |
| careers          | 26    | 17          |
| associated       | 25    | 16          |
| influence        | 25    | 16          |
| personal         | 25    | 16          |
| participant      | 25    | 16          |
| interview        | 25    | 16          |
The purpose of this study was to explore themes and conceptual issues within athletes’ transition out of sports based on widely accepted theoretical backgrounds through a relatively new methodological approach. Researchers within the transition, athletic, and sports domains considered applying a theoretical background for their studies in the earlier stage of planning the study process. Research has indicated that theory provides a framework for analysis and an efficient and relevant method for research projects [27]. Researchers have predominantly explored athletes’ transition processes and provided empirical information for future researchers. In this study, the researchers analyzed the selected peer-reviewed articles following certain criteria and found some valuable outcomes. This study provides information on how themes and concepts are interrelated within each transition theory.

In this study, selected articles used one or more of the four extensively applied transitional theories to construct an interview protocol. Among the included ten articles for this study: four of them used only Schlossberg’s model [12]; three of them used Taylor and Ogilvie’s model [7]; the remaining three articles used multiple models including the above two models, as well as Wylleman and Lavallee’s, and Stambulova’s transition models [18,19], for their theoretical framework. Schlossberg’s model [12] for analyzing human adaptation to transition describes how the perception of a particular transition, the characteristics of the transition environment, and the individual’s characteristics interact to proceed to adaptation to transition. Unlike the other three models, this model was not explicitly established to explain athletes’ transition processes; it can be used for studies that focus on athletes’ transition characteristics rather than specific transitional processes of athletes. The results showed that the term “transition” had the most hits for the articles that used Schlossberg’s model [12], while other results touched on other aspects of the transitional process, such as “career,” and “retirement.” Since the term “transition” appeared as the most frequent concept from the articles, studies that aim to discuss athletes’ transition processes may choose the model to establish their theoretical background.

Unlike Schlossberg’s model [12], the conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes [7] aims to conceptualize athletes’ transition processes. This model explains athletes’ transitional process between their pre-retirement and post-retirement life, which includes the causes, factors that may affect adaptation to life after an athletic career, and the available resources leading to the consequences of termination of the athletic career [28]. Since the model emphasized having relevant resources and skills for athletic transitions, the results of this study showed that the term “career” was among the concepts with the most hits. Furthermore, the concept map indicated that “coping,” “family,” “social,” and “career” are considered prominent concepts surrounding “transition.” Future studies may apply...
this model if their study focuses on athletes’ careers and recourses while transitioning out of sport.

Researchers have conducted studies on athletes’ transition and emphasized the importance of the topic in helping athletes’ transition after their athletic careers [1–3,7,15]. Athletes’ transition studies are critical because unexpected, unwanted, and even pre-planned transitions may significantly affect athletes’ lives after transition [7]. Most people experience difficulties when they face significant changes in their lives. If they face a non-normative transition, stress and difficulties may be much higher and more significant than during normative transitions. This can be even more serious for student athletes. Student athletes face a significant amount of pressure to perform successfully in their academic and athletic commitments. However, student athletes are less academically motivated [29] than non-athletic peers because many student athletes prioritize their athletic role over academics, especially revenue-generating student athletes. Academic knowledge and other achievements outside of sports can be a great resource for student athletes’ lives and give them a direction when they face an inevitable transition out of sports. The resources needed for a healthy transition [7] can be satisfied by conducting pertinent academic, and other, activities outside of sports. To assist and provide relevant support, researchers should use an appropriate theoretical framework for direct studies. This study can provide future researchers with insights into athletes’ transitions to guide their qualitative inquiries and choose appropriate application models.

From this study’s results, the term “career” was counted as one of the most important concepts and themes from the analyzed articles. Taylor and Ogilvie’s model [7] emphasized that athletes must possess relevant resources and skills to expect a healthy career transition. A healthy career transition may encompass a wide range of possible outcomes. Career sustainability may be one form of positive career transition. A sustainable career is defined as “sequences of career experiences reflected through a variety of patterns of continuity over time, thereby crossing several social spaces, characterized by individual agency, herewith providing meaning to the individual” [30] (p. 7). In terms of athletes, sustainable careers can be based on athletes’ prior careers as athletes or students who establish resources and skills for their lives after sports.

Most studies on sustainability in sports are related to themes of the environment, facilities, and social sustainability. Sustainability in athletes’ transition has not been studied in depth, and research in this field is at a very early stage. However, this study is of great significance for future athletes. Future research is expected to establish practical and conceptual frameworks regarding sustainable processes for athletes’ career transitions.

**Limitation**

While this study had a unique methodological approach that revealed rich insights into athletes’ transition research, it has some limitations. This study applied four theories regarding athletes’ transition. If future researchers collect data with larger sample sizes, they might provide more significant results. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized because of the small sample size. The selected articles were analyzed using Leximancer, a computer-assisted qualitative analysis software that has been increasingly used in recent research. Although Leximancer contains many attractive features for researchers, it has some limitations. For instance, Leximancer only allows the analysis of data written in English. If studies were written in other languages, including the terms used, they would have to be excluded from the analysis, even though they may have been essential. There are some relevant articles in other languages, especially in Spanish. However, these studies were included in this study due to the capability of the authors and the analytic program adopted, Leximancer. The software does not provide automatic translation for other languages. Two concepts from different languages which have the exact same meaning cannot automatically be merged with the software. When text data scripted in different languages are used for single scientific research, there should be additional validation.
procedures considered (translation and back translation process, translation discrepancy analysis and more). Thus, this may be considered for future research.

Since Leximancer analyzes and counts every word used from the selected articles, it may repeat or double-count some words. For instance, “sport” and “sports” from two different articles can have the same meaning; however, Leximancer does not recognize the different-structured words as words with the same meaning during analysis.

In summary, this study makes a methodologically significant contribution to the field. The importance of athletes’ transition studies is increasing, and various research approaches are needed. Thus, using relevant theoretical backgrounds will help researchers explore in-depth and high-quality information from their studies. Study results from future researchers can provide diverse insights for educators, coaches, counselors, and administrators to help athletes’ transition.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, J.C. and H.-D.K.; methodology H.-D.K.; validation, J.C.; formal analysis, H.-D.K.; investigation, H.-D.K.; writing—original draft preparation, J.C. and H.-D.K.; writing—review and editing, J.C. and H.-D.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study since no personal information was involved in this study.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The datasets generated for this study would be available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References
1. Lally, P. Identity and athletic retirement: A prospective study. Psychol. Sport Exerc. 2007, 8, 85–99. [CrossRef]
2. Smith, A.B.; Hardin, R. The transition experiences of division I and III collegiate athletes. J. Athlete Dev. Exp. 2020, 2, 1. [CrossRef]
3. Stokowski, S.; Paule-Koba, A.L.; Kaunert, C. Former college athletes’ perceptions of adapting to transition. J. Issues Intercol. Athl. 2019, 12, 403–426.
4. Smith, A.B.; Hardin, R. Female Student-Athletes’ Transition out of Collegiate Competition. J. Anat. Sport 2019, 4, 61–86. [CrossRef]
5. Beamon, K. “I’m a Baller”: Athletic Identity Foreclosure among African-American Former Student-Athletes. J. Afr. Am. Stud. 2012, 16, 195–208. [CrossRef]
6. Kidd, V.D.; Southall, R.M.; Nagel, M.S.; Reynolds, J.F.; II; Scheyett, A.M.; Anderson, C.K. Profit-athletes’ athletic role set and post-athletic transitions. J. Issues Intercol. Athl. 2018, 11, 115–141.
7. Taylor, J.; Ogilvie, B.C. A conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes. J. Appl. Sport Psychol. 1994, 6, 1–20. [CrossRef]
8. Brewer, B.W.; Van Raalte, J.L.; Linder, D.E. Athletic identity: Hercules’ muscles or Achilles heel? Int. J. Sport Psychol. 1993, 24, 237–254.
9. Phoenix, C.; Faulkner, G.; Sparkes, A.C. Athletic identity and self-ageing: The dilemma of exclusivity. Psychol. Sport Exerc. 2005, 6, 335–347. [CrossRef]
10. Stoltenburg, A.L.; Kamphoff, C.S.; Lindstrom Bremer, K. Transitioning out of Sports: The psychosocial effects of collegiate athletes’ career-ending injuries. Athl. Insight 2011, 3, 115–133.
11. National College Athletic Association. 2018–2019 NCAA Division I manual; NCAA: Indianapolis, IN, USA, 2018.
12. Schlossberg, N.K. A Model for Analyzing Human Adaptation to Transition. Couns. Psychol. 1981, 9, 2–18. [CrossRef]
13. Schlossberg, N.K. Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Practice with Theory; Springer Publishing Company, Inc.: New York, NY, USA, 1984.
14. Haerle, R.K. Career Patterns and Career Contingencies of Professional Baseball Players: An Occupational Analysis. In Sport and Social Order; Ball, D.W., Loy, J.W., Eds.; Addison-Wesley: Reading, PA, USA, 1975; pp. 461–519.
15. Mihovilovic, M.A. The Status of Former Sportsmen. Int. Rev. Sport Social. 1968, 3, 73–96. [CrossRef]
16. Hansen, A.; Perry, J.; Ross, M.; Montgomery, T. Facilitating a successful transition out of sport: Introduction of a collegiate student-athlete workshop. J. Sport Psychol. Act. 2019, 10, 1–9. [CrossRef]
17. Chroni, S. “Ani”; Pettersen, S.; Diefenbach, K. Going from athlete-to-coach in Norwegian winter sports: Understanding the transition journey. Sport Soc. 2020, 23, 751–773. [CrossRef]
18. Stambulova, N. Symptoms of a Crisis-Transition: A Grounded Theory Study. In *SIPF Yearbook 2003*; Hassmén, N., Ed.; Orebro University Press: Orebro, Sweden, 2003; pp. 97–109.

19. Wylleman, P.; Lavallee, D. A Developmental Perspective on Transitions Faced by Athletes. In *Developmental Sport and Exercise Psychology: A Lifespan Perspective*; Weiss, M., Ed.; Fitness Information Technology: Morgantown, WV, USA, 2004; pp. 507–527.

20. Andronikos, G.; Westbury, T.; Martindale, R.J. Unsuccessful Transitions: Understanding Dropout from the Athletes’ Perspective. *Athens J. Sports* **2019**, *6*, 195–214. [CrossRef]

21. Krippendorff, K.H. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*; Sage Publications: Los Angeles, CA, USA, 2018.

22. Thomas, D.A. Searching for Significance in Unstructured Data: Text Mining with Leximancer. *Eur. Educ. Res. J.* **2014**, *13*, 235–256. [CrossRef]

23. Smith, A.E.; Humphreys, M.S. Evaluation of unsupervised semantic mapping of natural language with Leximancer concept mapping. *Behav. Res. Methods* **2006**, *38*, 262–279. [CrossRef]

24. Crofts, K.; Bisman, J. Interrogating accountability. *Qual. Res. Account. Manag.* **2010**, *7*, 180–207. [CrossRef]

25. Wu, M.-Y.; Wall, G.; Pearce, P.L. Shopping experiences: International tourists in Beijing’s Silk Market. *Tour. Manag.* **2014**, *41*, 96–106. [CrossRef]

26. Jowett, S.; Cockerill, I. Olympic medallists’ perspective of the athlete–coach relationship. *Psychol. Sport Exerc.* **2003**, *4*, 313–331. [CrossRef]

27. Wacker, J.G. A definition of theory: Research guidelines for different theory-building research methods in operations management. *J. Oper. Manag.* **1998**, *16*, 361–385. [CrossRef]

28. Kadlcik, J.; Flemr, L. Athletic Career Termination Model in the Czech Republic. *Int. Rev. Sociol. Sport* **2008**, *43*, 251–269. [CrossRef]

29. Wolverton, B. NCAA Says It’s Investigating Academic Fraud at 20 Colleges. Available online: http://chronicle.com/article/NCAA-Says-It-sInvestigating/151315/ (accessed on 21 January 2015).

30. Van der Heijden, B.I.J.M.; De Vos, A. Sustainable Careers: Introductory Chapter. In *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers*; De Vos, A., Van Der Heijden, B.I.J.M., Eds.; Edward Elgar Publishing: Cheltenham, UK, 2015; pp. 1–19.